

Jordan Times

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Qatari leader arrives Tuesday

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Court announced on Sunday that Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani will arrive here on Tuesday for a three-day visit to hold talks with His Majesty King Abdullah on bilateral relations and the region's current situation. On Wednesday, Sheikh Hamad will be accompanied by King Abdullah and Her Majesty Queen Rania to Aqaba, a Royal Court statement said. Meanwhile, Qatari Ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Fahd Bin Jassem Bin Abdullah Al Thani on Sunday said the visit of Sheikh Hamad comes within the framework of joint Jordanian-Qatari coordination. He added that the talks between the King and Sheikh Hamad will include means of strengthening and developing ties in all fields and activating bilateral agreements. Also on Sunday, King Abdullah received a phonecall from Bahraini Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa during which they exchanged views on bilateral ties.

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King to meet Clinton in May

AMMAN (AFP) — King Abdullah will visit the United States in May for talks with President Bill Clinton, a Jordanian official said on Sunday. U.S. Ambassador William Burns confirmed that Clinton had made the invitation to King Abdullah at the funeral of King Hussein in February, but he said a firm date had not been fixed. It would be King Abdullah's first official visit to the United States since becoming King on the death of his father.

Settlers take over houses in Arab east Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Jewish settlers took over two houses in Arab east Jerusalem on Sunday, claiming to have property deeds for them, but moved out provisionally after a few hours, police said. The settlers — students from an ultra-nationalist religious institution — had renovated the two ruined houses without permission, claiming that they belonged to Jews before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. They agreed to move out temporarily when requested to do so by the police, while their ownership titles could be checked.

'Russia channelled billions through offshore bank'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Russia has shunted billions of dollars through a shell company, with some of the money possibly supporting President Boris Yeltsin's reelection campaign, Newsweek magazine says. Financial Management Co. Ltd (FIMACO), based in the Channel Islands, a British tax haven, has handled Russia's hard currency reserves over the past six years, says the weekly in the report to appear Monday. In 1996, the obscure company speculated illegally in Moscow's fledgling domestic bond market by investing more than \$143 million channelled from the Russian Central Bank, Newsweek says, citing anonymous sources and the bank's internal audit. In doing so, FIMACO, which is run through Eurobank, circumvented rules barring foreign institutions from buying domestic bonds, the magazine explains.

Explosion stops Iraq-Turkey pipeline

ANKARA (AP) — An explosion damaged the oil pipeline linking Iraq to Turkey on Sunday, cutting the oil flow, a pipeline official said. The cause of the blast was unknown, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity from the site of the explosion in the south-eastern province of Mardin. The blast caused a fire that was still burning, although firefighters had stopped it from spreading, Mardin Gov. Filizet Guven said. It was not clear when the flow of oil could resume, said Guven. The damage seemed minor, but its extent would be assessed Monday, he added.

Planes carrying 15 reported missing

BOGOTA (AP) — Two small planes carrying 15 people, including a local television crew and government development workers, were reported missing on Sunday. Rescue workers said they have been unable to locate either plane. The first aircraft to disappear, a DC-3 cargo plane with eight occupants, vanished Thursday. The other plane, a Piper carrying a two-man TV crew and officials from a federal agency working to curb illegal drug crops, disappeared Saturday in heavy rains and lightning near Ataco, 180 kilometres south-west of Bogota in Tolima state.

King attends ceremony marking 31st anniversary of Karameh Battle

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces, on Sunday attended a ceremony commemorating the 31st anniversary of the Karameh Battle in the Jordan Valley.

King Abdullah laid a wreath of flowers at the memorial honouring the soldiers who fell in defence of the Kingdom on March 21, 1968, in the town of Karameh, when Israeli forces carried out a major attack on the village. Thirty-one years ago the Jordanian Army and Palestinian fedayeen of Fateh joined forces in defence of Arab land with a heavy artillery barrage against the Israeli tanks. The raid was repelled with heavy losses to the invading Israeli troops.

At the memorial, King Abdullah recited verses from the Holy Koran before reviewing the commemorative plaque bearing the names of the fallen.

Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Kaabneh, the commander of the Fourth Mechanised



His Majesty King Abdullah lays a wreath on Sunday at a memorial at Karameh during a ceremony commemorating the 31st anniversary of the Battle of Karameh (Photo by Youssef Allan)

Royal Division, members of the Royal family, the Senate president and House speaker, senior government officials and high-ranking military personnel attended Sunday's ceremony.

Delegations from universities, schools, local councils and other organisations visited the memorial at the battle site and laid wreaths at the monument. Also on Sunday, King Abdullah received cables

of allegiance on the occasion of the Karameh Battle anniversary from the prime minister, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and the directors of the security services and the Civil Defence Department.

King voices confidence in Central Bank policies

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday urged the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) to pursue its policies aimed at achieving monetary and financial stability in Jordan, boosting the investment climate, and encouraging development plans for the creation of new jobs.

Speaking during a visit to the CBJ accompanied by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh and Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, King Abdullah reaffirmed his confidence in the central bank and its role in realising the objectives of comprehensive development in Jordan.

He said the CBJ's role should be further consolidated and its independence ensured so that it can achieve national objectives and carry out comprehensive economic reforms. CBJ Governor Ziad Fariz presented a briefing on the bank's activities and its role in helping to execute national economic

programmes and implementing monetary, economic, financial and investment policies to ensure further economic stability in Jordan. Later, the King made an inspection tour of the bank's sections and was briefed on the mechanism of their functions.

King, EU envoy discuss peace process, Jordan-Europe ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah and EU special envoy to the Middle East Miguel Angel Moratinos on Sunday discussed the stalled peace process and Jordanian-European relations, a Royal Court spokesman said.

He said King Abdullah and Moratinos reviewed obstacles facing the Palestinian-Israeli track and discussed the European role in supporting the peace process.

King Abdullah expressed Jordan's appreciation for

the EU role and described it as "wise and just," stressing the need to implement the signed agreements.

In December, Israel unilaterally froze implementation of the Wye River memorandum with the Palestinians, which was reached last October due to the direct intervention of the late King Hussein.

King Abdullah reiterated Jordan's full support for the legitimate right of the Palestinians and their leadership to establish an independent state on their

national soil, the Royal Court official said.

He added that King Abdullah and the European envoy also discussed Jordan-EU projects and European aid to the Kingdom.

Moratinos, who is based in Cyprus, arrived in Amman on Saturday night and left Sunday at noon after the talks.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib.

House bloc deliberates response to 'rows' with ministers

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The government, which has not yet submitted its policy statement to Parliament, is already facing warnings by some angry deputies who say they will withhold their vote of confidence because they have been slighted by some ministers.

Deputy Sa'd Hayel Srour said some lawmakers were offended by comments made by Interior Minister Nayef Qadi at the home of Deputy Bujis Hadid on Wednesday.

According to the Arabic daily Al-Dustour, Qadi and Deputy Mijhim Sqour exchanged harsh words at the gathering at Hadid's home. Other deputies

present lashed out at the minister. Al-Dustour added, and were responded to by Qadi with "unacceptable words."

The daily said that in another row last week Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan and Deputy Khalil Atiyah clashed over the minister's plan to dissolve the municipal councils ahead of the upcoming elections.

"We understand that ministers are facing continuous pressure due to their work," Srour, a former speaker of the House, told the Jordan Times on Saturday. "But it is totally unacceptable to deal with deputies in a rough manner."

He said the deputies of the 10-

member Al-Tadamon (Solidarity) bloc, including Sqour, met on Saturday to discuss how to deal with these developments.

"We have not made up our minds, our stand will depend on the behaviour of the ministers and the policy statement the Cabinet will submit to the chamber," Srour said.

He added that other groups in Parliament are holding continuous consultations to reach a consensus on whether or not to withhold confidence in Rawabdeh's Cabinet.

When asked to comment on the deputies' remarks, Qadi described the row with Deputy Sqour as "normal," saying that such arguments "happen every now and then between minis-

ters and lawmakers."

The minister told the Jordan Times on Sunday that he thought that the issue had been resolved at Hadid's house and did not expect it would escalate to such a level.

"The row with the deputy focused on the attitude of an employee at the Ministry of Interior which was criticised by the deputy [Sqour]. We discussed the matter at Hadid's residence, and it was over," the minister said.

"I do not think that what happened will have any impact on the relationship between the Lower House and the government, and it is unlikely to affect the vote on the government," Qadi said.

Netanyahu warns of tough action if Palestinians declare state

Agencies

PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu warned Sunday that Israel would take tough measures if the Palestinians declare an independent state.

"I am issuing a new warning to the Palestinian Authority: Israel will react in the toughest possible way in the event of a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," he told Israel Radio.

"Such a violation of the Oslo accords would trigger the collapse of the peace process, which would not be good for the Palestinians," the hardline premier said from Ukraine during a tour of several former Soviet Union countries.

Netanyahu has repeatedly threatened to annex the parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip still under Israeli control if Palestinian President Yasser Arafat goes ahead and unilaterally proclaims an independent state on May 4.

Promising peace talks with the Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese if he was reelected on May 17, Netanyahu said the Palestinians were unlikely to see it as to their advantage to push on with peace talks ahead of the Israeli election.

"If we're elected they'll conceivably have to concede more and receive somewhat less, maybe a lot less, and if our opponents win — which won't happen — they'll expect to get a lot more and give less," he said.

On Sunday, Arafat arrived in Paris for talks with French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin on the planned declaration of Palestinian statehood.

Arafat arrived here from Sweden where top officials advised him to postpone plans to declare independence on May 4, when the interim peace accords signed with Israel expire. Chirac and Jospin were to meet

with Arafat on Monday before he travels to Washington for talks with President Bill Clinton the following day.

France is a supporter of Palestinian rights to self-determination but Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine has questioned whether Palestine should be declared on May 4, saying that such a proclamation should be made "in the best conditions."

In Stockholm where he held talks for two hours, Arafat was told that Sweden fully believes Palestinians have the right to declare statehood, but that timing was important.

"Sweden questions whether May 4 is the appropriate time to do so. That is what we told Arafat," said Swedish Deputy Prime Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen, adding that such a declaration could be "counter-productive."

Arafat, currently on a six-day tour of world capitals designed to

draw up support for the declaration of an independent state, hinted during an earlier visit to Vienna on Sunday that such a proclamation could be delayed.

"In compliance with the Oslo accords, it is clear that we have the right to declare [a state] at the end of the five-year transition period," Arafat said after a meeting with Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima.

Asked about the date, he replied: "It's under discussion with our friends in the European Union (EU) and the United States."

Arriving in Vienna, Arafat told the Austrian press that "64 per cent of Israelis favour the peace process, while 35 per cent accept the idea of an independent Palestinian state," the Austrian APA agency reported.

Arafat has already been to Athens, and is to travel to Ottawa, as well as Washington. The EU and the United States

have advised Arafat not to proclaim statehood until some days after Israeli general elections scheduled for May 17.

But Arafat is also looking for — and may receive — greater recognition of the Palestinians' right to their own state at some point in the future, officials said, especially from Washington.

That would allow him gracefully to postpone the actual proclamation.

At stake is not only Palestinian self-determination but also the future of the peace process with Israel as the end of the five-year interim period set out by the 1993 Oslo peace accords approaches.

After May 4 existing arrangements on Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are due to end and the peace process itself enters uncharted waters, an uncertain situation aggravated by Israel's elections.

An Israeli newspaper reported on Sunday that justice and foreign

ministries officials had warned Netanyahu against any annexation of occupied Palestinian lands.

Such a move would "damage Israel's standing on the international scene," the Yediot Ahronot said.

The officials said Israel should make clear to Arafat that he would find himself with only a makeshift state because "he will no longer be able to demand that Israel cedes more territory if he breaks the Oslo accords."

Israel's intelligence services nevertheless believe Arafat will delay any proclamation at least until after Israel's general elections, Yediot said.

But they believe Arafat will firm up his intentions from May 4, arguing that Israel has violated commitments under October's U.S.-brokered Wye River accord by carrying out only one of three promised withdrawals from the West Bank.



AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah was proclaimed Queen on Sunday in a letter His Majesty King Abdullah addressed to her.

Following is an unofficial translated text of King Abdullah's letter:

"I send Your Majesty my deep affection, pride and respect.

I have known you for seven years as a young Jordanian, Arab, Muslim woman who upholds the good traits of the people of our country and believes in the Arab Nation's ideals and values and in Islam's great principles which have served as a guiding light for humanity over the ages.

I have recognised in you your modesty and humility, and your keen desire to serve the people as a loyal daughter of the nation, who understands our people and shares their same hopes and aspirations, appreciates their concerns, and sincerely believes in their causes.

You have enjoyed with me over the past years the care of our great father — my father, the father of all Jordanians. From the purity of his soul, we will continue to be sustained. From his deep faith in Jordan's role and message, we have been enlightened, and thus we are fortified by determination, resolve and strength.

Your numerous and sublime traits are enhanced by your nobility of character, crowned by your modesty and deep sense of responsibility, qualities that are enriching to humanity.

Your direct and positive contact with the nation and citizens' concerns, has enriched these traits and abilities and doubled your resolve to relentlessly carry the noble national message.

As it was the will of God the Almighty that I carry the first responsibility in our dear Jordan, I have chosen you, my

companion. Mother of Al-Hussein, to be, as of today [Sunday], 'Your Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah,' and to be my partner in my continuous struggle and our joint pilgrimage to serve our dear Jordan and the glorious Arab Nation.

I pray to God to protect Your Majesty and provide you with further determination and strength, and to empower you to pursue your noble message in this life.

With my continuous affection, great confidence and appreciation."

Queen Rania was born to Faisal and Ilham Yassin in Kuwait on Aug. 31, 1970. In 1987, after completing her primary and secondary education in Kuwait, she enrolled at the American University in Cairo where she majored in business administration and obtained her BA in 1991.

Queen Rania is the president of Jordan River for Development Projects (JRDP), a non-profit development society that aims to create job opportunities among the underprivileged communities through its income-generating projects.

The society is also working on the alleviation of the problem of child abuse in Jordan.

Queen Rania has helped several national institutions that serve the local community through their development initiatives.

She also works in association with the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation, which aims to offer technical, managerial and marketing assistance to local industries and to promote Jordanian products and services internationally.

In addition, Queen Rania is the president of the Water Sports Federation in Jordan.

Their Majesties were married on June 10, 1993 and have two children, HRH Prince Hussein, born June 28, 1994, and HRH Princess Iman, born Sept. 27, 1996.

Queen Rania on Sunday received congratulatory cables from Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Senate President Zeid Rifai and Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali.

Israeli supreme court orders Egyptian bedouin expelled

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli supreme court ruled Sunday that several hundred bedouin who slipped into the country from Egypt are here illegally and can be expelled.

The court rejected an appeal by an Israeli bedouin dignitary who warned that the 400 Sinai bedouin who fled after a tribal feud would face "bloody vengeance" if they returned.

With the ruling, the court lifted its temporary ban on the expulsion of the members of the Azazmeh tribe

who arrived here almost a week ago, and the Israeli military could kick them out at any time.

Another branch of the same tribe lives in the Jewish state, but the two have had no contact since the end of Israel's occupation of the Sinai peninsula in 1982.

An Israeli member of the Azazmeh, Amar Abu Mahamar, criticised the court decision and the stance of Israeli politicians.

"No politician believed it was a good thing to defend these bedouin, some of whom had served as track-

ers in the Israeli army" before Israel turned over the Sinai to Egypt.

"We don't believe so-called Egyptian promises concerning their security, none of which is in writing," Mahamar said.

The Egyptian authorities said they will ensure the bedouins' security when they return and that a camp has been set up for them on the Egyptian side of the border.

The 400 men, women and children arrived in the northern Negev desert on March 15, saying their homes in Wadi Al-Jaifa

were destroyed by Egyptian police over a vendetta with the rival Attaya tribe.

While the court was deciding the bedouins' fate, Israeli military authorities set up a temporary camp and provided them with humanitarian aid.

Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon had called for the bedouin to be sent back immediately.

"I don't think that Israel or any other country can allow that suddenly a thousand people cross its border," he said.



CELEBRATING THE NEW YEAR: An armed plainclothes policeman detains a wounded Kurdish demonstrator during the Kurdish new year 'Nawroz' celebrations in Istanbul on Sunday. Across the country, clashes erupted in the less heavily guarded Istanbul, where several people were injured and scores were detained when riot police charged 300 Kurdish men and women gathered in an open-air cattle market. Demonstrators, chanting slogans in support of Kurdish autonomy-seeking rebels, threw stones at police, who shot in the air to disperse the crowd (AP photo)

Iranians celebrate new year with flowers, sweets

TEHRAN (AP) — Iranians lined up outside shops to buy flowers, sweets and other gifts on Sunday to usher in the Persian new year.

Nearly every Iranian family woke up before 5:15 a.m. (0145 GMT) to wait for state-run radio and television to announce the beginning of the new year, or "Nawroz."

Crowds were so heavy at a shrine in the holy city of Qom that two women were crushed to death, police said. Two other women and a man were injured in the incident. Qom is 80 kilometres southwest of the capital Tehran.

Unlike other countries in the Middle East, Iran and some of its neighbours follow the traditional Persian calendar, which begins on the first day of spring.

In Tajikistan, particularly in "rural" areas, women cook a special meal called "sumalak," which is made of wheat sprouts.

Azerbaijan holds parades amid much singing and dancing.

The festival also is marked by some 20 million Kurds, who live in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

Neighbouring Afghanistan used to celebrate Nawroz, but with the conquest of the country by the fundamentalist Taliban militia, celebrations have been banned. The Taliban consider such festivities as a violation of Islam.

In Iran, people flock to shrines and visit the graves of relatives as part of their observance of Nawroz.

This year is particularly significant because it marks the 100th birth anniversary of Iran's late spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In a speech marking the new year, which is 1378 on the Persian calendar, President Mohammad Khatami thanked Iranians for their patience during last

year's oil crisis.

He said a new agreement by Gulf oil countries to cut back production to bolster world prices will have "a positive impact on the economy."

In Tehran, shops were jammed with customers lining up to buy holiday treats and gifts.

Most of the city's florist shops were open, and many displayed large floral arrangements along the sidewalks.

Many stores had remained open overnight to accommodate last-minute shoppers. Many children get new clothes for the holiday, and clothing also is a popular gift for relatives.

As in some Asian countries, the Iranians give each year an animal designation. This year is the year of the rabbit. It follows the year of the tiger.

The Persian solar calendar begins with the migration of Prophet Mohammad from the

city of Mecca to Medina, which occurred in 622 according to the Gregorian calendar used in the West.

The Islamic calendar starts from the same point, but uses a lunar year of 354 days, making the current Islamic year 1418.

Iranians also mark the new year by gathering around a table set with seven foods symbolising rebirth, health and patience: wheat germ, sweet pudding, apples, lotus fruit, garlic, sumac and vinegar.

A gold fish in a bowl generally centres the table for good luck.

"I think this year is very promising because at the time of new year, it was raining," said Akram, a 35-year-old teacher who would only give her first name.

At family gatherings, a jar of water is often on the table to symbolise purity and freshness. There's also bread, the sustainer of life.

Israel considering water cuts for farmers

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel is mulling a 40 per cent cut in water supplies for agriculture after an exceptionally dry winter, the national infrastructure ministry said Sunday.

The cabinet will meet Wednesday to discuss the consequences of the drought and the proposal for cuts made by Water Commissioner Meir Ben Meir, a ministry news release said.

This winter, which should be the rainy season, Israel received less than 40 per cent of the

rain it normally receives. "This is one of the driest years in the last 60," Amon Porat of the meteorological service said Sunday.

"We're expecting rain this week, but it won't be enough to compensate for the shortage over the past few months," he said.

The southern Negev desert city of Beersheva had received 40 millimetres of rain by the end of February, only 22 per cent of its annual average.

In the north, which usually gets more precipita-

tion, 340 millimetres of rain had fallen by the end of last month, 54 per cent of the annual average. Israel uses 1.8 billion cubic metres of water a year. Sixty per cent of that goes for agriculture, 30 per cent is for domestic use, and the rest goes for industry.

The drought has led to a debate in Israel over how to increase the country's water resources.

"We have been on a knife edge for several years," said Jean Horgen, chief of the French water

company Lyonnaise des Eaux in Israel. "Every year Israel consumes all of its available resources. There are no reserves. But their needs keep increasing because of demographic growth and higher standards of living," he said.

The drought has also tried Israel's relations with Jordan, with the Israelis telling Amman they cannot deliver the 50 million cubic metres of water this year that was promised under their 1994 peace treaty.

Turkey cracks down on Kurdish day of protest

MARDIN (R) — Turkish police and troops stepped up patrols in the mainly Kurdish southeast on Sunday, tightening security for a Kurdish spring festival that has often been the focus of separatist protest.

Security and fire services raced to douse traditional bonfires lit to mark the Kurdish Nawroz festival and disperse groups of young men who had gathered around them.

One protester and five policemen were wounded when anti-riot police opened fire to disperse some 40 demonstrators in the main commercial city of Istanbul's poor district of Gazi, witnesses said.

Police opened fire after the demonstrators responded to an order to disperse by throwing stones. The protesters and two policemen were hit by bullets. The demonstrator was shot in the head and was in a serious condition in a local hospital.

Police in the south-eastern province of Mardin, near the Syrian border, detained and expelled a Reuters cor-

respondent and three other Turkish journalists.

The southeast has been particularly tense since Turkey arrested Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan last month.

Authorities are concerned that Nawroz could spark further attacks in the southeast and in major cities in western Turkey, where a large number of Kurds live.

The festival traditionally welcomes Spring but has now become a rallying point for militant Kurdish nationalism.

In Istanbul, members of an "anti-terror" police unit fired into the air before charging a crowd of around 200 people who had gathered around burning tyres in a stretch of waste ground.

Witnesses said over 100 people were arrested. Police and armoured cars chased protesters into streets around the area, where small fires smouldered.

Police and soldiers took up positions in the centre of the eastern town of Tunceli and on

main roads.

Reuters reporter Osman Senkul, a Turkish national, was taken by police from his hotel in Mardin province with other Turkish correspondents to the regional capital Diyarbakir. He was told he would be put on a flight out of the region.

Police had shown the reporters a directive from the deputy emergency rule governor saying that "foreign and domestic members of the press may not work in the region without authorisation from the directorate of press and information."

The press officer of Mardin province had earlier told Reuters that reporters would be welcome during the Nawroz festivities. Reuters had not been informed of any changes to the rules governing access to the region.

Police have previously declared that an emergency zone, set up to combat activities of the Kurdish Labour Party, was closed to journalists and expelled several cor-

spondents. The Mardin region, however, was removed from the zone some time ago.

Police raided offices of Kurdish groups nationwide on the eve of Nawroz, which means "new day" in Kurdish.

"We know 165 were detained in Istanbul. Other offices have been searched, houses raided... so it is hard to know the full figure, but they are saying 2,000 nationwide," said a spokesman for the People's Democracy Party, a legal Kurdish grouping.

Authorities say Kurdish guerrillas seeking revenge for the capture of Ocalan are behind a recent wave of attacks across Turkey. The rebels are waging an armed campaign for self-rule for the south-east in which more than 29,000 people have died in the last 14 years.

Ocalan faces a treason trial, accused of ordering the killing of state employees, including teachers and their families, as well as attacks on security forces.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO
19:00Le Journal
19:15Extra Large
19:30News headline
19:33Les Invention de la Vie
20:00Worldnet
20:30Serie - Entre Terre et Mer
21:15Filler & Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30FX

PRAYER TIMES

04:16Fajr
05:34(Sunrise) Duha
11:43Dhuhr
15:10Asr
17:51Maghreb
19:09Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweidieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweid-
ieh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic
Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church
4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

Agaba.....12/23
Deserts.....05/17
Jordan Valley.....11/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16 Agaba 24 Humidity
readings: Amman 55 per cent,
Agaba 43 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:
Ajloun.....03/11
Jerash.....07/16
Um Qays.....06/16
Madaba.....06/14
Petra.....07/15
Dead Sea.....12/23

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-
ment of Meteorology
Relative cold weather conditions
will prevail with skies cloudy to
partly cloudy. Scattered rain
showers are expected and winds
westerly active. In Agaba, skies
will be partly cloudy, rainy, winds
northerly moderate, and seas
calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman.....06/14

AMMAN:
Dr. Abdul Majid Al Sha'iri 4391405
Dr. Fakhri Tayeh.....4915880
Dr. Adnan Zaghoul.....4988140
Dr. Fakher Bilal.....5522233

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy.....5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy.....4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy.....5537004
Ruksa Al Dawa Pharmacy.....5536169

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department.....5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
.....4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police.....192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....4775121
Highway Police.....5343402
Traffic Police.....4896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Police Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints.....4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints
.....4787111

Telephone Information (directory
assistance).....121
Overseas Calls.....0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
.....4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Television.....4773111
Radio Jordan.....4774111
Water Authority.....5680100
J. Electricity Authority.....5815615
Electric Power Co.....4636381
RJ Flight Information.....44-53200

EMERGENCIES

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery.....5921199
The Islamic, Abdali.....5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre.....5856856
Luzmila.....4630195
Khaldi Maternity.....464281/6
Akileh Maternity.....4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity.....4642362
Malhas, J. Amman.....4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani.....5607071
Shmeisani Hospital.....5607431
Jordan Hospital.....5607580
University Hospital.....5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital.....566727/9
Al-Abli, Abdali.....5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen.....4777101/3
Al-Bashir.....4775111/26
Army, Marka.....4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital.....5157100
Arenal Hospital.....5607155
Al Ansal Cancer Centre.....5353000
Jerusalem Hospital.....4387181

Queen Alia Int. Airport.....44-53200

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The Islamic, Abdali.....5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre.....5856856
Luzmila.....4630195
Khaldi Maternity.....464281/6
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FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

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Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
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(44)53200-5, where it should
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other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (53200). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be supplied
on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:30Damascus (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:05Sanaa (RJ)
09:30Beirut (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)

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DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00Beirut (RJ)
11:00Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:15Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
20:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:45Abu Dhabi, Tehran (RJ)
21:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
21:15Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:10Damascus (RJ)

Other Flights
04:10London (BA)
08:20Alexandria (BA)
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Khartoum (SD)
11:30Sanaa (IY)
12:45Kiev (6U)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50Istanbul (SD)
18:40Beirut (ME)
20:05Tel Aviv (LY)
20:30Frankfurt, Damascus (LH)
01:25Athens (OA)
02:00Milan (AZ)

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NEWS IN BRIEF

King cables Khatami, Khamenei

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday sent two congratulatory cables to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei on the occasion of the Nawroz. In his messages, King Abdullah wished Khatami and Khamenei health, happiness and prosperity.

PM condoles Hariri

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh on Sunday sent a cable to former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri condoling him on the passing of Hariri's father.

200 families receive assistance

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Social Development distributed in-kind assistance to the poor families marking the end of 40 days of mourning after the death of King Hussein. The assistance was distributed to 200 families from the badia region in the Muwaqqar area.

Rafua receives Indian ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social and Administrative Development Faisal Rafua received on Sunday Indian Ambassador to Jordan Charan Singh and discussed with him means of bolstering bilateral ties in social work and activities.

Ma'ani meets Turkish ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — University of Jordan President Walid Ma'ani on Sunday met Turkish Ambassador to Amman Tuncer Topur for talks on means to strengthen joint cooperation. During the meeting, Ma'ani stressed the importance of cooperation in several fields and briefed the visitor on the university's future plans. Topur expressed hope to increase the number of Turkish students currently studying at the university.

Queen Rania distributes in-kind aid to needy ahead of Adha festivities

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah on Sunday distributed food, gifts and in-kind donations to several needy families living in underprivileged neighbourhoods of Amman.

The donations are part of the Royal family's donations ahead of the Eid Al Adha (feast of sacrifice) on Saturday.

The Queen in her capacity as chairperson of the Jordan River Foundation (JRF) visited some families in their homes enquiring about their conditions and hearing requests and problems. She promised to help find solutions and provide further assistance.

Families prayed that God may bless the soul of the late King Hussein.

The distribution of in-kind donations is part of the foundation's programmes to provide clothes, foodstuffs and other in-kind help to 1,000 needy children living in Jabal Nasseef, Wadi Had-dadeh, Jabal Nasser, and the refugee camps of Wihdat and Al Hussein in Amman as well as children living in Qweirah, Karak, Ghor Safi, Madaba and Tafleh in southern Jordan, and Zarqa and Ramtha north of Amman.

Through a number of projects around the country benefiting needy families, the JRF has created jobs for 3,400 women in the rural, urban and badia regions of Jordan.

IAF issues fatwa against abolishing segregation of school swimming pools

AMMAN (J.T.) — An Islamic Action Front committee of religious scholars has issued a fatwa (injunction) against a draft "Youth Law" that will abolish segregation between the sexes in school swimming pools.

The IAF statement, signed by committee president Ibrahim Zeid Keilani, IAF number two Hammam Sa'id, and members Mohammad Abu Faris and Mohammad Aweidha, said the parliamentarians' decision "is null and void from a religious point of view."

The draft is one of three laws expected to be discussed and voted on jointly by the Upper and Lower Houses during the next ordinary session of Parliament, to open in October.

Other drafts include a legislation on court-fees and a controversial anti-corruption law that will exclude deputies and senators from declaring their assets and properties upon taking office. Last week, the IAF issued a fatwa against the anti-corruption draft.

Lower House endorses public amnesty draft

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament on Sunday endorsed a public amnesty draft law following a heated debate in which several lawmakers demanded that the draft include the release of political prisoners.

The law, which received the approval of 34 deputies out of the 58 who were present during the debate, will facilitate the release of about 500 prisoners before the Eid Al Adha, which will start on Saturday.

The law still must secure the endorsement of the Senate. The Upper House is expected to convene Monday to discuss the government-initiated proposal on Sunday.

Deputies expressed their appreciation to His Majesty King Abdullah for the Royal Decree declaring the public amnesty.

The law excludes those convicted of espionage, drug trafficking, embezzlement, bounced cheques, theft, forgery, slavery, rape, premeditated murder, bribery and those who were convicted of

establishing illegal organisations.

Those who committed their crimes before March 18, 1999, will benefit from the amnesty.

The House refused a proposal from Deputy Khalil Atiyah to include those who were involved in attacks against Israeli targets in Jordan, including Ahmad Dakamseh, a soldier who killed seven Israeli girls in March 1997.

Deputies also refused another proposal to include members of the Al Tahrir Party (Liberation), who were sentenced for jail terms ranging from one to three years.

During the debate, Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh urged legislators not to include "those who committed terrorist acts that targeted the security of the country and its people by using explosives, whatever the objectives were."

Many deputies demanded that those who issued bounced cheques and were sentenced for different terms be included in the amnesty "to enable

them to repay their debts."

Rawabdeh described this kind of crime as a "great danger" on the national economy and urged lawmakers to reject such amendment.

The House also rejected proposals to include those who were convicted of premeditated murder if the case was settled by tribal law. The proposal was a reference to the murder cases that are settled through the agreement between the family of the killer and the relatives of the victims.

Rawabdeh indicated that such proposal could lead to more killing "because the relatives of those killed will take their revenge when the murderers are released from prison."

The premier said he has formed a committee to discuss the cases of some "detainees" who were detained for a variety of reasons upon orders by the governors in different parts of the country. According to Rawabdeh, their release is being sought before the Eid.

The House turned down a proposal by Deputy Moham-

mad Azaideh, head of the Public Freedoms Committee, to release a prisoner whom he described as "the only prisoner to be convicted of espionage now held in Jordanian jails, because he served 25 years in jail."

Azaideh did not state the name of the prisoner nor the case in which he was convicted of espionage.

The only article that was scrapped by deputies from the draft was once concerning those who committed crimes that are punishable by financial penalties, including foreign workers who have been convicted of working illegally in the country.

The House also recommended that the government issue a "special amnesty" for cases that are not included in the law, especially for those who served half their jail terms and have shown remorse for their crimes. These cases would be reviewed on a case by case basis by the government, according to the House's recommendation.

Unions demand better compensation, pension and health care

AMMAN (Petra) — Representatives of six labour unions in Jordan on Sunday met Minister of Labour Eid Fayed and presented grievances and demands of union members. They also requested the minister's interference to help settle outstanding issues.

The delegation demanded that the new labour law be put into force to halt the arbitrary dismissal of workers, asked that there be constant contact between the labour movement and the Ministry of Labour and requested that

labour unions be represented in labour-related conferences.

They also demanded that the Ministry of Labour respond to the unions' call for the introduction of amendments to the Social Security Law to give better terms compensation and pension terms to Jordanian workers and to include both labourers and pensioners in a comprehensive health insurance system.

Fayed said his ministry is open to complaints and demands from workers and their unions and pledged to

examine each issue objectively.

He also stressed that the labour ministry is working in cooperation with representatives of employers and workers to safeguard the interests of all parties and contribute to stability.

After listening to a briefing from the delegation members about the unions' role, the minister said he encourages continued unions dialogue between the ministry and the employers to ensure cooperation based on understanding and mutual

respect.

The minister said he was prepared to work with concerned parties and unions to address problems and remove barriers to continued development.

The delegation included representatives of the unions of workers at the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, as well as labour unions, chemical and mechanical industries, the Aqaba Ports Corporation, clearance offices, construction, health workers and air transport workers.

Jewellers union warns against laser-treated diamonds

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — The Jewellers Trade Union has warned citizens to be wary of diamond traders, many of whom are selling treated diamonds as pure ones and at pure diamond prices.

"We should spread awareness, since most citizens have little or no experience in differentiating between types of diamonds," President of the Jewellers Trade Union Anwar Gbasi told

the Jordan Times. The financial value of a diamond is figured according to international standards of purity, colour and solidity, said Gbasi.

"Traders cannot change the diamond's colour and solidity, but the purity of diamond can be altered by laser," Gbasi said.

"Therefore, some traders play with the diamond's purity level and sell to citizens at pure diamond prices."

Gbasi said, "impure diamonds were purchased by local jewellers from Israeli diamond traders. In most cases, both sides knew the diamonds were impure. In other cases, local traders were cheated."

"Unfortunately, the aim of these traders is profit. They do not care about cheating citizens," Gbasi said.

Jordanian jewellers traditionally bought pure diamonds from Belgium, but after the 1994 Jor-

dan-Israel peace treaty, some Israeli traders started coming to Jordan and sold diamonds "which were laser-treated by Israeli cutters, and look like pure diamonds," Gbasi said.

According to Gbasi some of the jewellers were transported to Gulf states via Jordan.

"This matter is extremely dangerous as some citizens buy these diamonds for the price of pure diamond, and discover only later that the

pieces are not pure," Gbasi said. "Our reputation in the diamond trade will be negatively affected in other countries."

Jewellers Trade Union's Secretary Gbaleh Sakagha told the Jordan Times that "local jewellers are not professionals in the jewellery trade. They sell treated diamonds as pure to profit within a short period."

"Jewellers should be honest in their craft and inform their customers

of the diamond's purity before they sell, otherwise their reputation will be negatively affected. I think that is more important than achieving profit," Sakagha said.

He stressed that experts in Jordan should not depend on foreign laboratories' accreditation and must examine each diamond to ensure its purity before offering it in the market.

Government agreement with Al Amal Cancer Centre to bring hope to cancer victims and alleviate pressure on Al Bashir

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — Khalaf Abdul Hadi, who suffers from lymphatic cancer, sat on his hospital bed with a glucose intravenous drip in his right arm — a routine chemotherapy treatment which has become his life.

"I find it difficult to breathe," moaned the blue-eyed government employee and father of four.

His neck swollen and cobra shaped because of the growing tumour, Abdul Hadi, 60, in excruciating pain, prays everyday that each will be his last.

"I'm bored with life. I wish I could take my life with my own hands," he told the Jordan Times as tears streamed down from his sad blue eyes.

He has been receiving chemotherapy at the overburdened facilities of the state-run Al Bashir Hospital, which offers free and general treatment to 220 cancer patients a day.

Samir Kayed, head of the Jordan Cancer Registry (JCR), said a total of 3,500 cases of Jordanian cancer patients was recorded in 1997.

Jordanians are entitled to free treatment at public hospitals in line with Article 13 of the 1983 health insurance scheme, added Kayed, who also heads the

Health Ministry's department of oncology.

However, many doctors and patients remain divided over the level of cancer treatment offered at public hospitals, especially at the strained Al Bashir hospital, compared to some private hospitals offering the latest state-of-the-art treatment.

"There is mounting pressure on our facilities," said Kayed.

Al Bashir, undergoing a major expansion programme, offers comprehensive treatment for cancer patients, including radiotherapy, linear accelerator, telecobalt, superficial X-ray, electron therapy, sealed and unsealed isotope therapy, surgery and chemotherapy.

However, cancer patients must register with the Department of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine to obtain a card enabling them to undergo free treatment.

Cancer patient Ahmad Ali said he had received five sessions of chemotherapy and a radiotherapy session since July.

"Things are quite organised here (at Al Bashir). The nurses are doing their utmost," said Ali, a truck driver who earned JD120 a month before the disease struck him. Now unemployed, he receives JD66 from the National Aid Fund

Doctors have for years condemned the lack of cooperation in cancer treatment between the centre and the Health Ministry because of personal rivalries and other complications. When both sides come to an agreement, the Amal centre will work more and stress will be reduced on Al Bashir

— Samir Kayed

(NAF) each month to support his family of six.

Many of Jordan's poor — about one third of the population live below the poverty line — are entitled to monthly donations from the NAF, run by the Ministry of Social Development.

Sitting on one of the five beds inside the hospital's outpatient department, Abdul Hadi claimed that nobody cared about his difficulty in breathing.

Mourning pressure on the hospital's facilities has discouraged many Jordanians — especially those who can afford to pay for the costly treatment — from receiving free treatment at Al Bashir.

Others, especially those who cannot find the needed treatment, apply to the Health Ministry or the Royal Court, to be sent to private hospitals or to be sent for treatment abroad.

His Majesty King Hussein, who died from cancer on Feb. 7, spent over JD5 million from his personal funds in 1997 on the treatment of Jordanians abroad — especially cancer patients — sending them to the United States and even Israel, officials said.

The amount paid by the late Monarch, Jordan's key champion of cancer patients, is slightly over the

JD4 million the ministry spends annually on cancer treatment — already straining the state's limited financial capabilities.

Cancer remains a nightmare, especially for impoverished Jordanians.

In a country where the annual income per capita is JD1,400, officials estimate that only one million of the Kingdom's 4.6 million population can afford treatment at the country's private hospitals.

Ensharah Hussein, 44, who has lost her long black hair from chemotherapy, has been suffering from a brain tumour since 1996. As a result, she often passes out.

"I had to take my eldest daughter out of school so that she can take care of me," said Hussein.

Her husband, a few years older, said even though treatment for the tumour was free, he had to pay huge amounts of money for drugs that were not available at the state-run hospital to treat the bouts of fainting that hit his wife.

"These drugs cost me nearly JD200," claimed her husband, who earns JD150 a month from working as cleaner in a private company. "What else can I do, she's my wife and God will always help us."

Non-Jordanians who seek

treatment at Al Bashir hospital, have to pay a nominal fee of JD50 per radiotherapy session and the full cost of chemotherapy.

A cancer patient needs an average of between 20 to 40 such sessions.

Scores of poor Iraqis, who cannot receive cancer treatment back home because of nine-year-old economic sanctions that has made the availability of anti-cancer drugs impossible, form a majority of the Arab nationals seeking state-subsidised help in Jordan. They are followed by Syrians and Egyptians.

The government recently finalised a draft agreement with the Al Amal Cancer Centre, a \$35 million facility completed in 1997 through donations of Jordanian citizens and non-governmental organizations.

"The draft agreement will include treating cancer patients whose treatment at the Bashir Hospital is not available. For example, uterus cancer that appears in women, or tumours, lymphoma and special types of leukemia that hit children," said Kayed.

The agreement, expected to be signed later this month at an estimated cost of JD100,000 a month, allows an unlimited number of patients to be treated

at the centre, provided that the cost of treatment does not exceed the estimated monthly allocation.

Local newspaper columnists and several doctors have for years condemned the lack of cooperation in cancer treatment between the Centre and the Health Ministry because of personal rivalries and other complications.

The modern 120-bed facility provides comprehensive services ranging from early detection to rehabilitation and physiotherapy.

On average, and if there are no major complications, an in-patient pays JD10,000 for the cost of radiotherapy and chemotherapy while an outpatient needs between JD1,300 to JD10,000.

Abdullah Khanib, representative of the board of trustees of the centre, said the facility was treating some 120 patients a day — keeping a 30 per cent occupancy rate.

"When both sides come to an agreement, the Amal centre will work more and stress will be reduced on Al Bashir," Kayed said.

Khanib said a bone marrow transplant at the centre costs nearly \$30,000 in the U.S.

"However, when it comes

to (saving) human lives, cost should not present a problem," said Khanib, whose own daughter, Dalia, died from lymphatic cancer at the age of 13.

Her Majesty Queen Noor, chairperson of the Centre's board, is expected to give the enterprise a strong push in the near future in memory of the late King Hussein, who worked hard to help Jordanians suffering from cancer.

Officials are also trying to find means to make cancer statistics more reliable and comprehensive.

"There is defect in the number of cases reported," said Kayed.

Though the JCR collects data from all private and public hospitals and clinics, Kayed said that nearly 10 per cent of cancer cases are never reported.

"Some physicians in private sector hospitals are not reporting cancer cases and some parents do not report their children's disease," he added.

"Sometimes cancer cases remain undiagnosed and when a person passes away, other causes are attributed to his or her death," Kayed told the Jordan Times. "Therefore, an autopsy should be carried out to determine the cause of death."

Refugees flee Borneo, death toll rises over 80

SINGKAWANG, Indonesia (AFP) — Thousands of refugees Sunday poured out of rural areas of Borneo fleeing days of ethnic violence which have left more than 80 dead, residents and the military said.

Makeshift shelters have been prepared for the mainly Madurese settlers fleeing to Singkawang in Indonesia's West Kalimantan province, the main town in the Sambas district, residents told AFP.

The violence has led to the deaths of 89 people in the past six days, Lieutenant Colonel Tukimin, the deputy spokesman for the restoration of order, said here. Around 40 others were injured, he said.

Thousands of people have fled the violence with 5,586 ethnic Madurese, mostly elderly people, women and children, being evacuated towards Pontianak on Saturday and Sunday, Tukimin said.

"We have heard that refugees would be soon coming in from various sub-districts and we are expecting them," said one resident.

On Saturday indigenous Dayaks and ethnic Malays paraded through the small town of Tebas waving three freshly severed heads.

On Sunday hunting rifle shots rang out in Sambas sub-district, some 50 kilometres northeast of here, as

groups of armed men hunted down Madurese.

The SCTV private television reported that refugees holed up at local military installations in Sambas and Pemangkat, were to be transported from there to the provincial capital of Pontianak on Sunday.

More than 6,400 refugees were expected to arrive in Pontianak soon, officials were quoted as saying in the Kompas daily.

Their numbers would swell more than 5,000 refugees who have already taken refuge in military and public installations in Pontianak, according to figures from the province's social affairs office.

Hundreds of others have sought shelter with relatives in Pontianak.

But the flood of refugees is already beginning to create difficulties.

"We are beginning to get shortages in medicine, as we are beginning to get cases of diarrhoea. This facility is now so overcrowded," said Hafidz Mulyadi of the Haj dormitory in Pontianak, where some refugees are sheltered.

At least 11,000 refugees were spread out in several shelters in Pontianak, including a mosque, military installations and a warehouse of the logistic agency, he said.

Two army trucks carrying scores of people passed



Indigenous Malays show their weapons in the village of Suka Rame in West Kalimantan. Ethnic unrest has resulted in the death of at least 70 people in clashes between indigenous Malays and a separate ethnic group from the central island of Madura. Indonesia has been rocked for months by fighting, often between different ethnic and religious groups, around its 17,000 islands, scaring off foreign investors (Reuters photo)

through Sambas earlier Sunday bound for Pontianak.

As the exodus continued, Dayak warriors, many dressed for war — a long leaf bound around the head — were seen parading in various towns in Sambas district, waving swords and spears.

Although military and police reinforcement had been deployed, no soldiers or police were seen on the Tebas-Sambas road

Sunday, and witnesses said six more houses were burning in a Sambas district.

In Pemangkat, where the bloodshed initially broke out, police declined said the streets were calm and had been cleared of armed mobs.

"The market is busy again and there are no more armed groups gathering on the streets," police First Lieutenant Rahman said.

The renewed bloodshed which broke out in

Pemangkat had initially pitted Madurese settlers against members of the Malay community.

But the indigenous Dayak community which in 1997 was involved in a bloody months-long open conflict against the Madurese which left 300 dead, joined the violence in favour of the Malays.

West Kalimantan police chief Colonel Chaerul Rasyidi Saturday issued shoot on sight orders in an

effort to stem the carnage. Rasyidi said the violence Monday erupted when a group of men, believed to be Madurese, attacked a truck filled with Dayaks in Parapakan village, leaving one dead.

The violence in Borneo came as the military appeared to have brought two months of Muslim-Christian violence in the Maluku islands, some 2,000 kilometres to the east, under control.

China still opposed to U.N. role on S. China Sea dispute

MANILA (AFP) — Beijing remains committed to peacefully resolving a dispute with Manila over a chain of South China Sea islands, but wants the row to be settled bilaterally without intervention from the United Nations, Chinese officials said Sunday.

Chinese assistant Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Beijing was committed to "building mutual trust" between both countries, stressing "all the problems" could be settled "through friendly consultations."

"China will continue to pursue a friendly policy towards the Philippines and whatever happens, this policy will remain unchanged," Wang told reporters after a meeting here with Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon.

Wang heads a group of Chinese officials who will meet with their Filipino counterparts on Monday and Tuesday to draw up confidence-building measures to prevent an escalation of the Spratly islands dispute. China and the Philippines are locked in a bitter row over Beijing's expansion last year of structures on Mischief Reef in the Spratly chain.

The outcrop is about 135 nautical miles from the western Philippine island of Palawan and is within the country's exclusive economic zone as defined by the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Beijing has said the structures were fishing shelters, but local defence officials said the buildings were intended for military use.

Asked to comment on Philippine President

Joseph Estrada's meeting with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in New York last week, during which the Spratly issue was raised, Wang said: "We have our own belief that our two countries shall settle the questions and the problems through friendly consultations between China and the Philippines on the basis of the international law including the principles in the UNCLOS and I am confident that our two countries have the capability to settle this problem."

Siazon said Sunday's meeting did not focus on any specific proposals from either country, but noted Wang "pleaded for a very rational and unemotional approach in solving this problem."

The Spratlys straddle vital shipping lanes on the South China Sea and are believed to sit atop vast oil and mineral deposits.

It is being claimed in whole or in part by the Philippines, China, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan.

Results of the meeting would determine whether the Philippines would raise the dispute before U.N. bodies such as the UNCLOS tribunal, Philippine foreign undersecretary Lauro Baja, who heads the government panel in the talks, said Friday.

"The structures are daggers in the heart Philippine security concerns and that is what we will impress on Monday," Baja said.

"The maximum demand is to remove those structures. Failing that, then you have to enter in to some sort of arrangement, a modus vivendi. That's what we should explore with the Chinese on Monday."

Balloonists lifted from desert after record flight

DAKHLA OASIS, Egypt (R) — Balloonists Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones were plucked from the Egyptian desert by a military helicopter on Sunday and flown back to this remote airstrip for an emotional meeting with officials and journalists.

Describing their record-setting 21-day flight as "the most amazing experience," Jones said they ended their mission as extremely good friends and worst thing they had to endure was the cold.

The pair had spent six hours waiting by their deflated balloon in the desert heat as officials frantically tried to pinpoint their location and send out rescue vehicles and aircraft.

The huge Breitling Orbiter 3 craft, weighing nine tonnes and as tall as the leaning Tower of Pisa, bounced to a safe landing in the desert

early on Sunday. "The message from the balloon said 'The eagle has landed,' deputy flight director Brian Smith told journalists in Geneva."

Piccard of Switzerland, whose father and grandfather also set records in the skies and under water, and Jones of Britain made history on Saturday when they crossed a "finish line" in northern Mauritania after a 20-day flight that took them more than 44,000 km.

But they flew their balloon on eastwards across Algeria, into Libyan airspace and touched down in Egypt.

Answering journalists' questions in the VIP lounge at the tiny oasis airfield, they appeared drawn and thin. They wore blue flying suits and sipped coke from wine glasses.

Jones said the most frightening moment occurred when the balloon got stuck over the

Pacific. "We were in the middle of nowhere and I think it then dawned on us on what mortality could be. Other than that I think the worst part of the flight was the cold... that was the hardest thing. It saps the spirit. It really does."

Jones said there was a large element of luck in their success and at one point they doubted they had enough fuel to complete the mission.

"And it was almost as if my magic, almost as if something beyond us was helping us... I thought, watching the instruments, suddenly there was absolutely no doubt we were going to do it."

He said he and Piccard had their "down moments" at different times and thus were able to support each other, and talking to their wives by radio helped them through difficult patches.

Asked about the state

of the balloon, he replied: "It's completely deflated, just like me really."

Piccard, close to tears at several points, said: "It's quite a big shock because Brian and I were for exactly three weeks alone in the balloon and six hours alone in the desert. And now we're with people again, I'm very emotional..."

He said he looked forward to sitting down with his family and his father "in front of a fire and to talk and to relax."

The two men were due to fly to Cairo later on Sunday.

In Geneva, flight spokesman Gerard Sermier said: "They are fine. There is absolutely no problem." He said they would not be able to return to Switzerland on Sunday as originally planned but would fly back for a news conference open to the public on Monday.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nigeria's president-elect opposes rapid privatisation

ABUJA (AFP) — Nigeria's President-elect Olusegun Obasanjo has voiced opposition to the outgoing military regime's extensive privatisation plans which he said were being rushed through. Obasanjo, due to take power on May 29 after winning last month's presidential election, said his approach was "slightly different" from that of the current regime headed by General Abdulsalam Abubakar. "Privatisation must be for a purpose, and for me privatisation is to get efficient service and to get investment into the country," Obasanjo told reporters late Saturday. "It must not be rushed. We must establish the objective. It must be transparent and open. We must have a reasonable, true value for what we are privatising," the retired general said at Abuja airport as he left on a visit to Britain. Last week Abubakar said his government would go ahead with the privatisation of a series of state-run companies before it leaves office in May, dismissing objections from Obasanjo's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Obasanjo said Saturday he had discussed his objections to the plan with Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) who visited Nigeria Friday. "I am happy that when I took up the issue with the managing director of the IMF he agreed with me," he said. "He told me: 'We want you to be open and transparent. We want you to be able to say the value of what you are privatising and how you came to that value.'" Obasanjo said. "So I am for privatisation but my privatisation has method," he added.

Indian minister favours South Asian states to unite

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani has called for a confederation of South Asian nations on the lines of the European Union, it was reported here Sunday. Advani was quoted as saying at a public meeting in the southern city of Mysore overnight Saturday that India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal could be members of such a union. The Press Trust of India (PTI) reported. But Advani said such a union could not be formed by force, adding his Hindu nationalists accepted the 1947 break-up of the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan. "India and Pakistan are two independent, sovereign nations and will remain as independent nations," he said.

Togolese begin voting in legislative elections

LOME (AFP) — Togolese voters began casting their ballots Sunday morning in legislative elections boycotted by the opposition to veteran President Gnassingbe Eyadema. Some 2.3 million people are eligible to vote in the elections to fill the National Assembly's 81 seats, choosing from 106 candidates. Turnout was low in Lome districts known to favour the opposition, and higher in pro-government areas. With only the ruling Togolese People's Assembly, two allied parties and a dozen independents standing, voter participation is the main issue in the polls, shunned by an opposition that insists it was robbed in last year's presidential election. The main parliamentary opposition, Action Committee for Renewal, on Friday criticised Eyadema for going ahead with the elections despite numerous appeals for dialogue on the presidential polls, which most opposition parties feel was actually won by Gilchrist Olympio of the Union of Forces for Change. The European Union has also called for talks on the presidential polls. So far the government and opposition have failed to agree on an agenda or venue for such talks.

'Health of China dissident deteriorating'

HONG KONG (R) — The health of Chinese veteran dissident Qin Yongmin has deteriorated after four months in jail without treatment for a heart ailment, a Hong Kong-based human rights group said on Sunday. Qin, sentenced to 12 years jail last year for trying to set up a political opposition party, has heart trouble, high blood pressure and gastric disease, the information centre of human rights and democratic movement in China said. The human rights group quoted Qin's brother as saying the dissident looked pale and swollen. "Qin Yongmin's health has seriously worsened because he had not received any medication for four months. He also has to work in prison, and the conditions and the food there are very bad," the human rights group said. Qin was jailed for seven years in 1981 for spreading counter-revolutionary propaganda and for incitement linked to his role in the 1978-79 democracy wall movement.

3 U.S. Navy servicemen arrested for alleged assault, robbery

TOKYO (AP) — Three U.S. Navy servicemen were arrested on Sunday on suspicion of assaulting and robbing a taxi driver in downtown Tokyo, police said. Yasuhide Iki, an official of Tokyo's Azabu police station, said the three are based at a U.S. naval base in Yokosuka, 45 kilometres southwest of Tokyo. The base is the headquarters of U.S. 7th fleet. Iki identified one of the suspects as Reed Jarrid Duarte, 22, but his home town was not available. He declined to identify other two Americans because they were both 19 years old. Under Japanese juvenile law, police must withhold the names of suspects below the age of 20. Iki said the three denied attacking the driver. He quoted driver Koji Miura, 49, as telling police investigators that one of the three tried to pay a 2,020 yen (\$17) taxi fare with a 5,000-yen (\$42) bill when they got off in Roppongi, a popular night club district in downtown Tokyo, on Saturday night. When Miura tried to give them the change of 3,000 yen (\$25), one of them allegedly punched him in the face and robbed him of another 3,000 yen. The three servicemen allegedly ran away, but police discovered them in streets nearby and arrested them. Iki said, Miura suffered a minor injury to his lip, the official said. U.S. military officials were not immediately available to comment on the case.



A young kite vendor prepares to sell kites during the 6th Thailand International Kite Festival in Nonthaburi. Participants from 17 countries took part in the two-day festival (AFP photo)

World

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A resident in the Western Australian town of Moora, 220 kilometres east of the state capital Perth, stands in the boot of his car partially submerged after floodwaters enveloped the town. The swollen Moore River, which burst its banks as a result of rains triggered by Cyclone Elaine, forced the evacuation of most of the town's 800 residents with more destruction expected from one of the most powerful cyclones ever to threaten the country (Reuters photo)

Powerful cyclone heads towards Western Australia

PERTH, Australia (AFP) — Thousands of residents in Australia's northwest were being evacuated Sunday as a severe tropical cyclone packing winds up to 290 kilometres per hour bore down on them, officials said.

Early Sunday, the bureau of meteorology upgraded the intensity of cyclone Vance to a severe category five, on an intensity scale of one to five, which is classed as "extremely dangerous with widespread destruction."

It is one of the most powerful cyclones to threaten Australia and stronger than cyclone Tracy which devastated the northern city of Darwin on Christmas Day in 1974.

It is expected to hit coastal areas sometime around 1200 noon Perth time Monday (0400 GMT), the Tropical Cyclone Early Warning Centre told AFP.

"The effect is already being felt with gusts up to 60 kph on the coast," said Len Broadbridge, regional director. "It is in the super

hurricane category and as bad as it gets," he said, adding that about 50,000 people were in danger.

Broadbridge said at 0700 GMT it was 300 kilometres northwest of the town of Karatha and 360 north of Onslow, with the impact path expected to be between Onslow and Exmouth.

State Emergency Services (SES) personnel said they had begun evacuating about 850 people from Onslow, a low-lying coastal community which is the base for offshore oil exploration, about 1,200 kilometres north of Perth.

A cyclone flattened the town in 1963, while three other cyclones this decade have caused serious damage. "We have several communities on yellow alert and are advising people in Onslow to evacuate," said SES spokeswoman Sandra Murray.

"We are preparing for the worst." Yellow alert signals that the cyclone is moving closer and an impact appears inevitable within 12 hours.

Red alert signifies it is imminent.

There are three major towns in the area — Port Headland, Karatha and Dampier — although the most at risk are Onslow and Exmouth, Broadbridge said.

The region, known as the Pilbara, is some of the hottest country on earth and also home to numerous isolated Aboriginal communities and cattle stations.

Broadbridge said the biggest worry was "storm surge" with seas expected to be five metres higher than normal.

"It is very possible they'll be serious flooding. This intensity has the ability to blow houses over, depending on where it hits."

The early warning centre was able to see the eye of the hurricane some 400 kilometres off the coast, indicating "it is very intense and powerful."

Local media reported a spokeswoman at the West Australian Petroleum Pty Ltd (WAPET), which operates the Barrow Island and Thevenard Island oilfields,

as saying the Barrow Island operations had begun shutting down.

"We're evacuating," she said, adding about 100 people were to be taken off the island.

Most oil producers off Western Australia, including Northwest Shelf producers further north, were believed to be shutting down operations and evacuating, the spokeswoman said. Further south, emergency services have evacuated most of the 800 residents of Moora, which was being swamped by the flooded Moore River.

Murray said the flooding was caused by the tail-end of another cyclone, Elaine.

Communications were down and all power and sewerage off.

"The whole town is under water," emergency service officials said.

"The south side of the town, the district high school, has been used as the base for people being brought from the flooded areas. On the north side of town, people are making for higher ground."

Kosovo rebel bastion burns under Serb attack

DONJE PREKAZ, Serbia (R) — The guerrilla stronghold of Donje Prekaz burned on Sunday as Serb government forces backed by armour churned through the muddy village, defying an international ban on offensive action in Kosovo.

Thick columns of black smoke darkened the sky as army and special police units swept the town, driving guerrillas and ethnic Albanian civilians before them.

A truck-mounted anti-aircraft gun lurched through thick mud between snow-streaked fields, moving up to support infantry threading their way cautiously through the village's narrow lanes. Sporadic small-arms fire crackled among the bedrogers.

Houses were burning in the hills around Donje Prekaz.

One soldier dressed in camouflage battle-dress flashed reporters a grin and shouted: "See what we're doing? When are the Americans coming?"

It was unclear whether the soldier was expressing scepticism that threatened U.S.-led NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia would materialise, or simply

looking forward to the possibility of a military contest against them.

U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke planned to visit Belgrade on Monday to give a last warning to the Serbs that they will get bombed by NATO if they continue new offensives in Kosovo or fail to sign a draft autonomy plan for the Serb province.

Ethnic Albanians, a 90 per cent majority in Kosovo, signed the autonomy deal at peace talks in Paris on Thursday.

The talks collapsed the next day when Serbs who rule the province refused to accept the deal or the 28,000 NATO ground forces supposed to deploy in Kosovo to ensure implementation.

A buildup of police and army forces in and around Kosovo in recent weeks, in violation of an October ceasefire, alarmed analysts who saw it as prelude to a big offensive.

On Saturday, Serbs in white coveralls and black ski masks drove thousands of Kosovo Albanians from Srbica southwest of Donje Prekaz, in a classic ethnic cleansing operation of a sort

not seen since the Bosnian war.

At least three Srbica Albanians were shot dead on Saturday and as many as 200 detained, the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Information Centre (KIC) said. There was no independent confirmation of the report.

Reporters who entered Srbica on Sunday found the town swarming with special police geared up for combat.

Snipers occupied roofs of buildings including the police station, whose windows were shattered by incoming mortar fire.

The police had mortar positions set up along the main street. Tanks and armoured personnel carriers were strategically placed at the south end of town on the main road to komorane.

Small-arms, machinegun and mortar fire rattled further south, indicating that ethnic Albanian guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were putting up a fight there.

There were a few smouldering houses in Srbica but most of the damage reporters saw from Saturday's action was confined to looting and vandalism south of

the police station.

The main road going north from Pristina, the provincial capital, to Podujevo and eventually to Belgrade 300 km away was blocked by security forces for a second day.

Serb forces were shelling Podujevo-area villages, the KIC said.

Travelling journalists also reported Kosovo's major east-west highway closed for much of the day by security forces.

The route west through Lausa to Vojnik, on which thousands of refugees had trudged on Saturday, was deserted on Sunday except for small groups of KLA soldiers at various points.

An elderly couple limped hand in hand towards Srbica from Lausa determined to try to find out what happened to their 39-year-old son, who was led away from their house in Srbica at gunpoint on Saturday.

U.N. refugee officials said on Sunday that the situation in Kosovo was dire and growing worse, with at least 50,000 displaced from their homes in the last month.

'Kosovo strikes aim preemptive, not punitive'

BRUSSELS (R) — The aim of any NATO military intervention in the Kosovo crisis would be to prevent a "humanitarian disaster" and not to punish Yugoslavia, a NATO official said on Sunday.

The alliance has not defined exactly what it means by the phrase, but the measure most often cited is the level of civilian casualties and the numbers of displaced people as a result of Yugoslav military action.

NATO says it is determined to stop forces under the direction of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic before they can create a catastrophic situation, by watching and predicting what Yugoslavia's military is about to do.

Punishing Yugoslavia is not the objective, officials said. "Let me stress that we are NATO action to be necessary... then our objective would be very clear," a NATO official said.

It would be "to prevent an impending humanitarian disaster in Kosovo, and to prevent President Milosevic from taking advantage of the OSCE (observers' mission) withdrawal to resume brutal offensives against innocent civilians, bombarding villages and forcing people to leave."

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) withdrew its 1,380 international observers on Saturday despite protests from Yugoslavia.

The OSCE feared they could be taken hostage to ward off NATO air strikes. The mission left Yugoslavia unharmed and went to Macedonia.

Germany and Italy are especially concerned that a Serb bid to wipe out the Kosovo Liberation Army and pacify the province by force of arms would unleash a tidal wave of refugees headed for their territory.

About 1.7 million ethnic Albanians live in Kosovo.

A NATO consensus to launch military action would appear to depend on allies agreeing that a humanitarian disaster was inevitable unless they ordered air strikes.

Assessment was going on hour by hour, officials said. President Bill Clinton on Friday said Yugoslav forces were "already over the threshold." But on Sunday Clinton authorised U.S. Balkans envoy Richard Holbrooke to go to Belgrade on a last-ditch peace mission.

Joe Hegenauer, chief of mission for the Kosovo office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told Reuters in Pristina on Sunday that the situation was getting worse.

"In the last week we've had probably the biggest movement of internally displaced persons since September," he said.

A concerted military offensive begun last July by Yugoslavia put over 250,000 ethnic Albanians to flight and resulted in some 50,000 taking refuge in the bush with no shelter and little food.

The U.N. reckons that 100,000 people have fled their homes this year — at least 70,000 of those in the six weeks since Kosovo peace negotiations first opened in Rambouillet, France on Feb. 6.

Hegenauer declined to describe the current situation as a "humanitarian catastrophe."

But unless Milosevic accepts the peace-and-autonomy deal without major changes and gives his assent to a NATO peacekeeping force, NATO allies are likely to conclude that the catastrophe they fear is only a matter of time.

Obuchi ends South Korea trip amid protests, conflict over North Korea

SEOUL (AFP) — Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi left South Korea on Sunday after a three-day visit aimed at cementing ties and reconciling policies towards Communist North Korea.

Obuchi's trip was marked by anti-Japan protests in which he was forced to flee from angry students through the back exit at one of Seoul's most prestigious universities following a speech calling for an end to "negative heritage" between the two neighbours.

A group representing former forced-conscripts and ex-Imperial Army sex slaves said Obuchi's trip confirmed Japan was not really sorry about its past war crimes, and warned they would not welcome a visit by Japan's Emperor Akihito.

"Obuchi did not even offer an apology. It shows their position," a group official said, adding they would protest the emperor's visit.

During his visit here, Obuchi

held a summit with President Kim Dae-Jung on Saturday, after which they issued a strong warning to North Korea saying they would not tolerate North Korea's missile proliferation.

The two leaders also appealed to Pyongyang to end decades of isolation and cold war confrontation for peace.

Kim and Obuchi, however, were not able to agree on how to deal with North Korea despite the missile threat as Tokyo refused to accept Kim's call for engagement policy with Stalinist North Korea.

Obuchi said he backed South Korea's "Sunshine Policy" of engagement with Pyongyang but said the North's missile threat prevented a significant thaw in relations.

Ties between North Korea and Japan are at a low after Pyongyang's launch last August of a ballistic missile over its territory. The incident prompted Tokyo to cut aid links and impose new sanc-

tions.

Kim pressed Obuchi to mend ties with North Korea and lift sanctions imposed after the launch. But the Japanese prime minister has said it would be difficult as long as North Korea's missile threat remains.

"In a situation in which North Korea does not dispel suspicions over nuclear weapons development, nor suspend the experimentation, launching development, deployment and export of ballistic missiles, it is difficult to build amicable bilateral relations," Obuchi said at Korea University.

Officials here said that quote alone was evidence Japan had no intention of doing what Kim had pressed for — to normalise relations between Pyongyang and Tokyo and lift sanctions.

"We had hoped the Japanese premier would agree to mend ties and lift sanctions following this trip, especially after the New York deal," a government source, who asked to remain

anonymous, said on Sunday.

"But Japan seems determined to see some progress in solving North Korea's missile issue first," he said.

In New York last week, North Korea agreed to allow U.S. inspections of a suspected underground nuclear site. The two sides did not touch on North Korea's missile threat, but they agreed to meet on March 29 to deal with the issue.

Obuchi's trip to South Korea follows a visit to Japan by President Kim last October.

Obuchi then gave Kim an apology for Japan's harsh colonial rule from 1910-45, but anti-Japanese groups here have said it was not "sincere" and no real "remorse" was expressed.

Japanese Emperor Akihito has also expressed "deep sorrow" over the suffering inflicted by Japan on the Korean peninsula, but many South Koreans still harbour bitter sentiment against Japan.

Second day of pig cull in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Soldiers for the second day Sunday shot thousands of pigs in a bid to stamp out a deadly virus which has claimed 50 lives, as the government announced plans for a lottery to raise money for devastated pig breeders.

The crisis sparked by the Japanese encephalitis virus has also spilled beyond the country's borders, triggering import bans in Singapore and Thailand.

Around 311,000 animals are to be destroyed in a week to stop the spread of the virus which was first discovered in Malaysia in October.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was quoted as saying by the New Sunday Times the government would set up a lottery to be carried out jointly with gaming operators to raise funds to compensate pig breeders.

The funds raised would also go to ease the cost of a vaccination programme and the culling operation, he said, adding the finance ministry would announce the details later.

But opposition lawmaker Lim Kit Siang urged the government to offer more concrete assistance.

"The government should not

make a roundabout, but be more responsible in the crisis by coming up with direct government allocations and grants," Lim told AFP.

Lim urged cabinet to allocate 502 million ringgit (\$132 million) to compensate farmers, provide assistance to families forced to evacuate the affected areas and offer credit facilities to some 2,000 breeders.

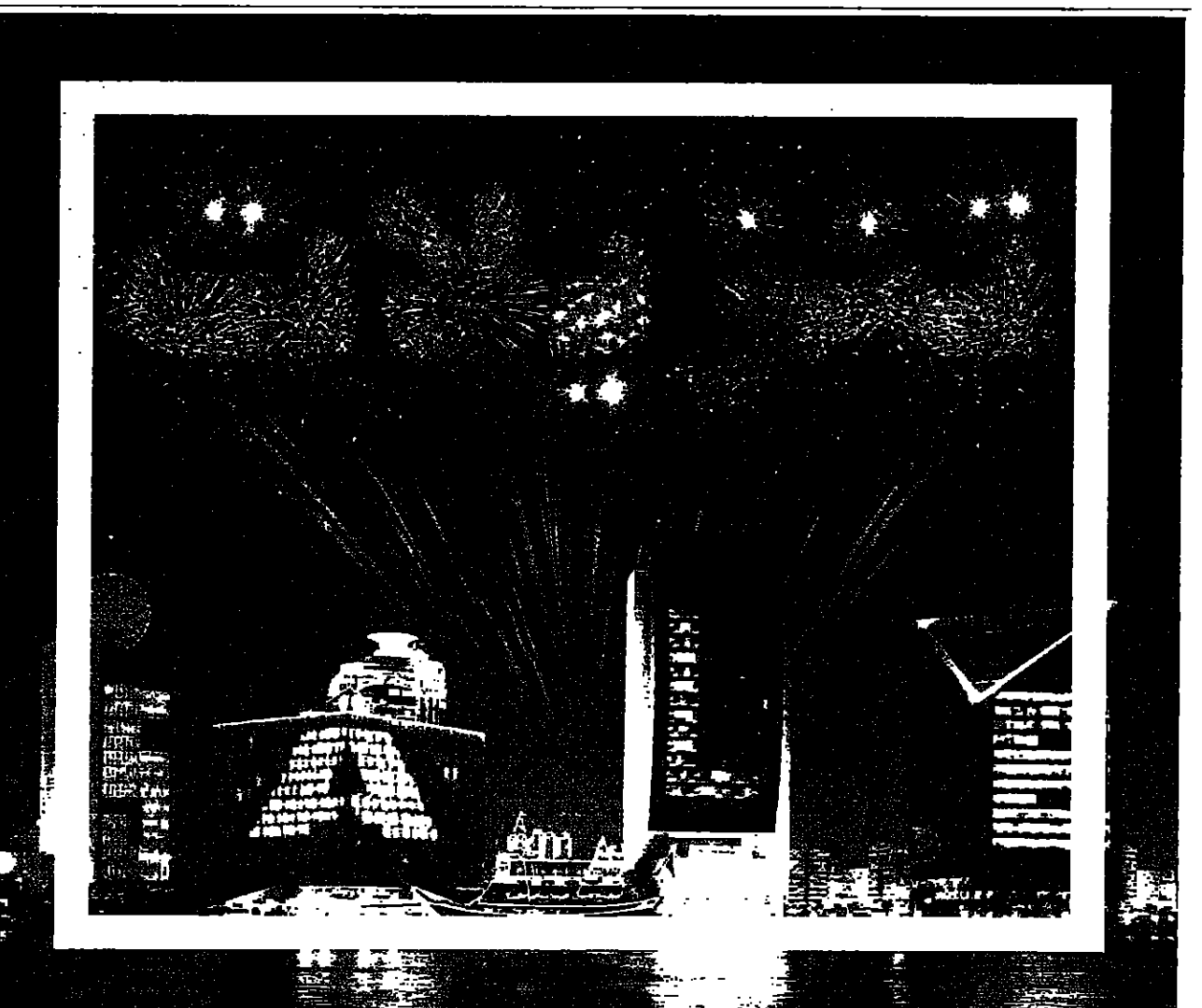
"(The) 502 million ringgit allocation is less than any one of the three bailouts of Bank Bumiputra (Malaysia) Bhd. in the past 12 years," he said.

Lim also called on Health Minister Chua Hui Meng to resign

and bear full responsibility for the epidemic, which has crippled Malaysia's two-billion ringgit (\$526 million) pig-breeding and pork industry.

Malaysian soldiers continued Sunday to shoot thousands of pigs in three villages in southwest Negeri Sembilan state, as neighbouring Singapore and Thailand banned imports of some Malaysian livestock.

More equipment was being brought to the scene to help the operation which was gathering pace with some 2,000 troops involved, the Bernama news agency said.



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AMIDST THE controversy over whether the Palestinian National Authority should or should not declare a Palestinian state on May 4, Jordan and Egypt came out strong in their support of any decision taken by the Palestinians.

During talks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa and Palestinian official Mahmoud Abbas, His Majesty King Abdullah stressed the need for a joint strategy by Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian National Authority to face the challenges of the final status talks between Israel and the PNA. The King emphasised the need for concerted coordination amongst the three parties to ensure the commitments by Israel under the interim phase accords.

Although the timing of the declaration of the Palestinian state was left to the judgement of the Palestinian side, Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh declared on Saturday that Jordan "will support the state (Palestinian) when they (the Palestinians) decide to declare it."

The significance of the Amman meeting between Jordanian, Egyptian and Palestinian officials lies in that it occurred only three days ahead of crucial talks at the White House between President Bill Clinton and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. It seems clear from the joint communiqué issued at the end of the tripartite meeting that whereas the principle of declaring a Palestinian state is regarded as sacrosanct, its timing is viewed as tactical and less significant. This suggests that Cairo and Amman are counselling the PNA for restraint when it comes to the May 4 deadline and to keep its options open on the date for declaring its independent and sovereign state.

The Palestinians have acquired a right to declare their state on May 4 and compromising on that fixed date call for ironclad assurances both international and Israeli that the Oslo accords and the Wye River memorandum will be faithfully honoured and fulfilled within their time frame. All bets are on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu losing power in the upcoming Israeli general elections to a moderate leader such as Labour leader Ehud Barak. President Clinton will no doubt express the same confidence that a new Israeli leadership will emerge from the elections that would be more conducive for the full implementation of Israel's end of the bargain.

Yet this gamble on the triumph of reason and moderation in Israel over arrogance and extremism may not really bear fruit. The odds are still in favour of Netanyahu winning. Any move by the PNA now, in advance of the Israeli elections, could easily tilt the results in favour of the Israeli hard-liners. Although the Palestinians stand to lose either way they go, on balance erring in favour of international and Arab counsel appears to be the lesser evil under the circumstances. That is why the odds are now in favour of the PNA refraining from exercising its unquestionable right.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh said there are no regulations that authorise the Central Bank to interfere in or determine banks' working hours. Why did the Central Bank want to support the banks' desire for longer working hours in return for Saturdays off, asked Faneh. The Central Bank thought that the former government's decision to approve the two-day holiday was about to be taken and was afraid that Thursdays would be included in the holiday, keeping Jordan shut out from the rest of the international banking system for four successive days, he said. In addition Faneh said, the Jordanian Bank Society, which represents bank managers, exercised a lot of pressure. But, according to Faneh, the Jordanian Banks Association, representing 15,000 employees, opposed the plan, which was decided without its consultation, and threatened to take "escalating" measures, and so the Central Bank accepted "half" the solution by reducing the working hours. Banks were not created to serve managers but citizens, companies and government departments, and the Central Bank is required to cancel the Saturday holiday, concluded Faneh.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said that with the formation of any government, a vote of confidence becomes the main issue as a constitutional regulation between the government and the Lower House of Parliament. Receiving a vote of confidence or not depends on several factors: the government's political character and programmes, the prime minister's personality, ministers and how they are evaluated and the premier's deliberation with different parliamentary fronts, added Saket. The importance of these factors, however, have been minimised in the past years, argued the writer. This change is a reflection of the national programmes and the make-up of Parliament, and weakens the role of the Legislative Authority, said the writer. The current relation between the government and the Lower House should come under a comprehensive review in order to build firm constitutional ties for the benefit of the nation.

Cancel the debt of the poorest countries

By M. Dominique
Strauss Kahn

WE HAVE successfully launched the euro, and we are seeing in Europe the first signs of "new growth," generating more employment and more innovation, based on the spread of new technologies. This may add to the temptation to forget those who, for the moment, are left out of this process in our own societies, but even more so in the South, particularly in the poorest developing countries, where people are marginalised in so many ways: by mass poverty, by bad management and waste of scarce public resources, by an excessive burden of debt which prevents a dynamic of growth from getting started. We find among them many of our African partners.

Addressing those partners at the Franc Area meeting in April 1988, I put forward the idea of a new alliance based on mutual demands and mutual advantage. The thinking now going on about the debt problem in the G-7, and the campaign along similar lines being

conducted by the non-governmental organisations and many churches with a focus on the Millennium, afford us an opportunity to flesh out that proposal and remind them of our solidarity.

Our country has in the past made very great efforts to ease the debt burden of the developing countries: with a cumulative total of over 55 billion francs, France has been responsible for more than half the debt cancellation already made by the developed countries. In response to a French proposal, the 1996 G-7 meeting in Lyon launched the "heavily indebted poor countries" initiative, which allows up to 80 per cent of those countries' commercial debt to be written off.

We need to be go further. Despite these efforts, and even though grants represent a growing proportion of official development assistance, the burden of debt continues to bear most heavily on the poorest. With three per cent of the developing world's GDP, the poorest countries carry 10 per cent of those countries' total debt. On average, their debts are 4.5 times

the annual value of their exports, whereas for the developing world as a whole they are less than twice as high. Even so, these overall figures do not adequately convey the situation of individual countries: Mozambique, for example, today spends four times as much on debt servicing as it does on health, at a time when over half the population has no access to drinking water and 190,000 children die every year before the age of five.

This is why, in full agreement with the prime minister and President Chirac, I have invited my G-7 partners to abandon the policy of taking things one step at a time on debt and instead adopt an ambitious initiative, one both more generous and more demanding, in which everyone would participate equitably. It rests on a strong commitment: in the next generation, the heavily indebted poor countries must no longer have to make payments on debt owed to the public institutions of the rich countries.

But our initiative will be meaningful only if the "debt money" is transferred directly to the people. The additional resources derived

from the easing of the debt burden must not be recycled into unproductive spending "white elephants," arms purchases or squandered by bad management and official incompetence. On this point we shall be firm, engaging in constant dialogue with our partners and involving civil society in the recipient countries, as well as the NGOs which work alongside them. No more debt payments, but in return, more development and a transparent and rigorous public management: that is the French project for dealing with debt which we want to get our partners to agree to at the G-7 summit in Cologne.

We now have to convince our partners in the industrialised countries, then our partners worldwide, of the necessity of development. It is also essential to ensure the involvement of civil society and the players on the ground. With this in view, I am holding a meeting of the French NGOs in Bercy. This is a first. The world of voluntary organisations and international financial negotiations have rarely been linked. But nobody can

claim a monopoly of competence: my conviction is that no change, either in France or on the world scale, will happen without the participation of all the players. Governments will not reform all by themselves: less dependence, better "governance," that is France's ambition for the development of the South.

If we succeed, the children born in the poor countries in the years ahead will grow up in an environment very largely freed from the constraints of debt. By the time they reach adulthood, their countries will perhaps be able to pursue their development by once again seeking loans from private financial institutions or from national and international development banks. Only this time it will be on the basis of renewed confidence and hope.

The writer is the French Minister for the Economy, Finance and Industry. This article was first published on March 12 in the French daily, Liberation.



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Legal sovereignty over Palestinian territories lies with the Palestinians

By Pascal B. Karmy

FAISAL HUSSEINI, in charge of Jerusalem affairs in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), made no bones about it. Addressing himself to Benjamin Netanyahu at a recent lecture at the Hebrew University, he said "you do not have sovereignty over Jerusalem. You control Jerusalem by the force of occupation as sovereignty lies in the Palestinians." The European Union addressed a letter to the Israeli government stating in effect that Jerusalem is not within the jurisdiction of Israel as it is part of the occupied territories. Let us now consider cursorily the legal opinion about sovereignty with regard to the Palestinian territories.

Palestine became a state of its own after it was detached from the Ottoman Empire by the Allied powers after World War I, in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne of July 24, 1923. Under Article 2 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, Palestine was put under the mandatory power of Great Britain but together with states under Category "A" Mandate it was entitled as a nation, to provisional recognition of independence, to be rendered administrative advice and assistance by the mandatory power until such time as it is able to stand alone. Thus the mandate did not divest the Palestinian people of their sovereignty over their country.

As the late Dr. Henry Cattan the international law jurist says: "The inhabitants of Palestine were deprived not of sovereignty but of its exercise. Sovereignty was latent but at the end of the Mandate in 1948, sovereignty in the people was revived." Moreover, several international law jurists concur that sovereignty over a mandated territory lies with its inhabitants, so consequently the people of Palestine were entitled

to rule themselves and have the right to declare their independence. And as Dr. Abdul Qader Yassin wrote: "The West Bank is not a vacuum in law or an empty desert open for acquisition by anybody who cares to grab it by military force. The days of colonisation are over and in the modern law of nations, territory and people are not goods and chattels to be taken and disposed of by those who have the power to do so."

Thus, let alone the principles laid down in Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and particularly the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, the occupied territories belong to their inhabitants and legal sovereignty lies with them in contradistinction to political sovereignty. As Cattan in his valuable book "Palestine and International Law" writes: "A distinction therefore exists between legal and political sovereignty, the latter being factual dominion and control, and the former signifying rightful and inalienable title of a people to its territory."

The Arab League specifically decided in 1948 that the part of Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) occupied by the Arab forces (Jordan and Egypt) would be held in trust for the people of Palestine until the Palestine question has been finally settled. Furthermore when the union of Jordan and Palestine was proclaimed in 1950 by the National Assembly, it provided that "all Arab rights in Palestine shall be safeguarded, that those rights shall be defended by all legal means and that the union shall not prejudice the final settlement of the Palestine question."

This proviso clearly demonstrates that the rights of the Palestinian people and their sovereignty over Palestine were preserved despite the unification of Jordan and Palestine. Egypt, too, respected its position as

trustee of the Gaza Strip.

Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 reinforce the above postulations that Israel has no title at all in the occupied territories including Jerusalem and is merely an occupier. Its occupation should be governed by the Hague Rules of 1907 as complemented by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Geneva Protocols of 1970 concerning the protection of civilians in time of conflict, and Israel must ultimately withdraw from those territories.

In view of all the above, the Palestine National Council which represents the Palestinian people wherever they may be, is fully entitled to proclaim the state of Palestine on the basis of Palestinian sovereignty and of General Assembly Resolution 181 (II) of November 29, 1947 concerning the partition of Palestine and other subsequent United Nations resolutions relevant to the Palestine question, and also on the basis of the right of self-determination of people which is recognised as a peremptory principle of law (jus cogens) as enshrined in Articles 1 and 55 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Israel has no right to oppose the proclamation of the state of Palestine as it had itself proclaimed a state on the basis of the above-mentioned Resolution 181. And as Cattan says, Israel's opposition to the Palestine state is tantamount to a denial by Israel of its own birth certificate. Thus the recent declaration of Ariel Sharon to European ambassadors, that Resolution 181 is invalid and void, is tantamount to invalidating the state of Israel itself.

The writer was an advocate in Palestine in 1944 and, for many years, legal officer at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut and Vienna.

Letters to the editor
Affecting the family

THE RECENT Central Bank's decision to extend the bank's working hours for the sake of a two-day weekend is not so bad if adhered to in the right way, taking into consideration the many aspects involved.

In Jordan, there are many international agencies that adhere to the 2 days off, with no problems whatsoever. On the other hand, the above-cited decision with its late working hours is raising many problems: working hours have increased from 36 hours per week to 45, which means that working mothers at banks are away from their houses almost all day. They have few hours left at the end of the day, which are hardly enough to do all the house work and look after the children or husbands. Of course quitting the job is not the ultimate solution as the majority of Jordanian families can barely survive with two incomes let alone one.

At the same time, who can alleviate the added financial burden of having to send the children to their schools by school buses? Who can supply the banks' employees with the extra meal needed during the break? Who will reimburse them for the extra hours they are putting in? Who will look after the children when these are left alone all day long?

I am not an employee at a bank, but I can feel the sufferings of those who are and implore officials in charge to look again seriously into this matter which affects the heart of our society — our family.

Rula Samain Naffa
Amman

More laws needed

YESTERDAY I read about the new Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) proposal for parking meters to be installed in our capital to alleviate traffic congestion in certain areas. While we seem to be moving steadily along the path to look like major European cities a lot is left to be done.

Starting with police issues, I can name three items that should be added to our government's agenda. First is the introduction of a law to make the use of seat belts mandatory for front-seat passengers in all vehicles. The reason why is pretty obvious, I think. Second is the closure of alcohol stores on Fridays to prevent possible corruption (payoffs to police) and to also reduce the number of traffic accidents. Third is the enforcement of an age limit for selling cigarettes to minors (below the age of sixteen).

Moving to corporate reforms four major items can be named. They are a tax on corporate franchises, support for pro-labour measures, upgrading teachers' salaries, and arresting the growth of slums.

It is apparent that economies of scale can be achieved with large scale production and capital formation. Therefore at the present time we need to regulate instead of dissolve trusts. There are four essential tiers for accomplishing this. This can be done by enacting an anti-rebate railroad and airline law. This law should end the practice by our railroad and national airline of showing favouritism through the granting of rebates on freight railroad and airline charges. Also a bureau of corporations within the ministries of industry or labour should be formed. It should be empowered to investigate and report on most corporations. Its purpose is also to reduce the power of the professional associations and to relieve them of this duty (as they tried to do last month by investigating construction companies). I don't think the professional associations should do this, nor do I think they have the sufficient funds to do it well.

An interstate commerce commission should also be formed with the power to fix railroad and airline rates and to prohibit discrimination among shippers. It is unfortunate that our previous prime minister resigned in the midst of a battle between the bank employees' union and the CBI. Had the altercation continued a mechanism would have had to have been found to provide a solution. It seems that in the future an independent arbitration committee with a pro-labour bias should be appointed by the prime minister to investigate and recommend solutions to prolonged strikes.

Concluding corporate issues four items deserve importance. They are enactment of a pure food/drug law, a meat inspection measure, a better employer's liability law, and the resumption of the project to rewire electric lines from overhead poles to underground conduits.

Reforms in the private affairs of citizens are small. Our government should ensure the enactment of an inheritance tax and give guarantees to working men of a larger share of the wealth. These are needed also for support by Western nations of our economy. Personal reforms extend to the judiciary where it should be pointed out their primary obligation is to protect human welfare rather than property.

The last area of reforms should be initiated in the conservation sector. We need to preserve the wildlife, forests, and natural beauty of our country. Four tiers essential for its accomplishment are development of waterpower sites by private utilities and ensuring they are subject to enlightened safeguards, assigning more land to natural reserves, persuading lumber corporations to practice selective cutting techniques, and the doubling of the number of national parks.

In summary, reforms (more laws) are needed in four areas: increase regulation of business, encourage growth of labour unions, stimulate the rise of a welfare state, and conserve natural resources.

Yasar Atiyeh
Amman

Finnish team identifies Byzantine monastic complex on Jabal Haroon at Petra — Part II

(NOTE: This is the second of two articles on the first excavation season of the Finnish Jabal Haroon Project, working on Aaron's Mountain at Petra. The first article appeared Monday, March 15, 1999).

THE MOST significant discovery of the 1998 Finnish excavations at Mt. Aaron were the remains of a large three-aisle basilica measuring some 34 x 14 metres, with a single apse at the end of the wide (5.6 metres) central nave. The outline of half the central apse of this church was exposed in one excavation area, while another area uncovered the western end of the church. A separate secondary wall running in a north-south direction in the middle of the church divided it into two equal parts.

A faint structure west of the church may be a narthex, perhaps associated with a portico (on the basis of the evidence of column drums and a possible stylobate). An irregular atrium may have defined the area further west of the church, but further excavations are required to clarify this point.

The excavated floor levels in the aisles revealed that the church experienced at least two major occupational phases in the 6th-8th centuries AD. The church may have been established as early as the 5th century, but this is not certain yet from the limited excavations to date. Similar single-apse churches from the 5th and 6th centuries are known from the town of Humayma, an hour to the south by car today.

The work last year was part of the Finnish Jabal Haroon Project (FJHP), directed by Jaakko Frösén of the University of Helsinki (Finland). He is joined in overall project management and analysis by Zbigniew T. Fiema of Dumbarton Oaks centre for Byzantine studies (USA), who has worked at Petra for much of the past decade.

The excavated church near the summit of Mt. Aaron showed remains of glass and stone mosaics; some metal objects (including iron and copper alloy nails); fish and chicken bones; painted plaster pieces (especially in the apse area); marble paving slabs and table (altar?) fragments; stone vessels; a marble post fragment that prob-

ably came from the base of the chancel screen; fragmentary sandstone relief panels with figures of peacocks and eagles; and assorted clear and coloured glass fragments from windows, vessels, goblets, and lamps.

A series of rooms around the north court of the monastic complex seem rather large, and thus may have been rooms for visiting pilgrims rather than domestic quarters for resident monks. Monks could have lived in the complex, or in nearby caves or smaller structures located on the plateau or in the valley below. It is still not clear if this was an isolated monastery for monks who venerated St. Aaron and spent most of the year on their own, and/or was a pilgrimage centre that attracted visitors from around the region throughout the year (similar monastic complexes at pilgrimage centres in Jordan are Mt. Nebo west of Madaba, and the Church and Monastery of St. Lot in Ghor es-Safi).

North of the church, the excavations uncovered an apse that was quickly identified as that of a small chapel. A masonry pedestal in the centre of the apse was probably a base of the altar, and may have been used as a repository for liturgical accessories or relics. Frösén said in a recent interview. A fragment of the edge of a marble orthostat found in the altar area contained four nicely engraved Greek letters which read JARON at the end of the line,

probably the name of St. Aaron, Frösén said. The date of the piece is probably the 6th century AD. The chapel may be contemporary with the church, or perhaps from a later period.

Surveying the mountain

The archaeological survey of the whole mountain area, directed by Dr. Mika Lavento of the University of Helsinki, concentrated on the western side of the mountain in 1998, including the major water catchment area of the north end of Wadi el-Ruba'i. The survey identified many installations that were associated with agricultural and water-management activities; these comprised 130 barrages, 30 slope terrace walls, two water reservoirs, dams, a water channel, a watch-tower, a storage cave, several thresh-

ing floors, a lime kiln, four dwelling sites, eight house remains, a graveyard, a rock shelter, one non-natural stone heap, and other structures of unknown uses. Lavento said in a recent interview.

The barrages, or small dams, were built across wadis, and were grouped in about 12 clusters that included associated terrace walls in some cases. Some barrages downstream were 20 metres long and five metres thick, while others upstream were much smaller.

These complexes slowed down the rapid rate of water runoff after the occasional winter rain, allowed fertile silt to deposit on the agricultural terraces, and helped redistribute water into adjacent plots of land at lower levels. Water channels often led from the barrages to feed cisterns, reservoirs,

irrigated fields, or smaller tributaries. The whole integrated system was probably first built in the Nabataean period, but was used in the Byzantine and perhaps even the Islamic era.

The 1296 chipped stone tools collected in the survey show that human beings exploited this area as early as the Upper Paleolithic period (c. 40,000-16,000 years ago), and used locally available raw material as well as flint and chert from further afield. Specific types of stone tools identified included Levallois blade-flakes, and a fragmentary microblade core and arrowhead from the early Pre-Pottery Neolithic period (around 8000-7000 BC).

Pottery evidence

A total of 14,000 pottery shards collected during last year's survey dated almost totally to the Nabataean period, with only a handful of Roman, Byzantine and Islamic era shards. The Nabataean pottery was dated from around 20 AD to the early 2nd century AD, with most of it coming from the second half of the 1st century AD — about half a century before Rome's annexation of the Nabataean realm in 106 AD.

No pottery from after the early 2nd century AD was found, which suggests to some team members that the Roman annexation of Petra and the Nabataean realm in 106 AD may



By Rami G. Khouri

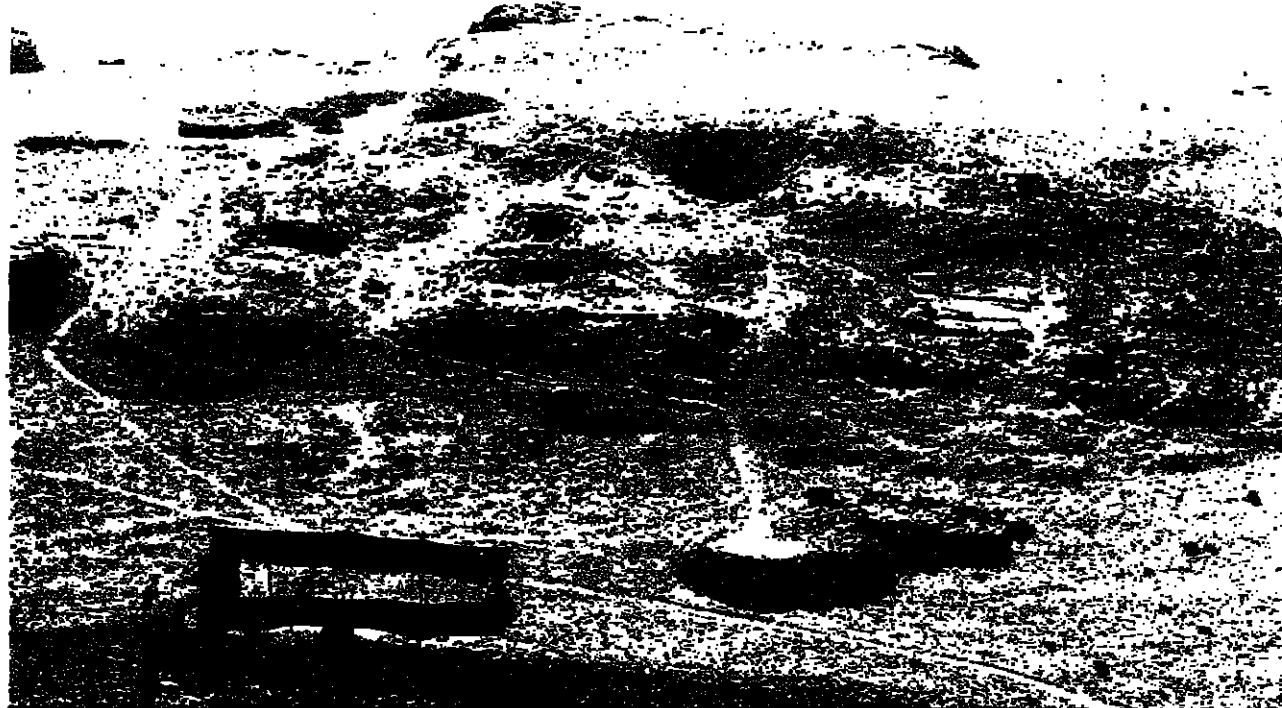
have temporarily ended the role of the Mt. Aaron area as a major agricultural production centre. The area resumed this productive role in the Byzantine period, several hundred years later, when Petra as a whole and this specific mountain area witnessed an expansion in settlement and construction activity.

One of the important and novel aspects of this project is the aim to produce a three-dimensional computer model of the entire mountain, which required the production last year of a detailed cartographic study of the mountain and its environs by a group from the Helsinki University of Technology, headed by Dr. Henrik Haggrén. Some of the advanced cartographic techniques used included tachymetry, digital recording, and photogrammetry, Haggrén said.

The work on Mt. Aaron to date has confirmed two major historical phenomena: the presence of the Byzantine era church, monastic complex and pilgrimage centre, and the more ancient intensive agricultural exploitation of the land on and around the mountain, thanks to extensive rainwater catchment and management facilities.

"There is little doubt that the Jabal Haroon area was always a major food supply area for Petra during the Nabataean and Byzantine periods," Frösén said.

Some 30 scholars and students from the University of Helsinki and the Helsinki University of Technology participated in the 1998 season, along with two scholars from other countries and two representatives of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, Dr. Fawzi Zavadin and Mr. Hani Falahat. The excavations were funded by the Emil Aaltonen Foundation (Finland) with logistical assistance by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.



General view of the excavations at the Mt. Aaron monastery, looking west (photo courtesy of J. Frösén)



Barrages of the water catchment and agricultural area on the western slope of Mt. Aaron (photo courtesy of J. Frösén)



Outline of half the western apse of the basilical church, during the early stages of the excavation (photo courtesy of J. Frösén)

Who gets sicker, men or women?

By Luisa Dillner

WOMEN GET sick and men die — that's how the issue of gender differences in health has been cheerily summarised. Women live five years longer than men but are thought to spend it wracked with pains in their backs and suffering from late-onset angina.

Much of the evidence for women's ill health has come from questionnaires and their more frequent attendance at GP surgeries. In the case of some specific diseases, however, research has been looking at the differences between the sexes at a cellular level.

Autoimmune diseases (in which the immune system wrongly recognises its own body as foreign and starts a programme of self destruction) such as multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis are more common, and possibly more severe, in women.

According to an article in last week's Science, this may be

because men and women have differences in their immune systems.

Women tend to produce an immune response that's typical for fighting viruses. Men, on the other hand, tend to produce protein substances called antibodies which come more into play fighting bacterial infections.

Although one daily newspaper reported the research in Science as meaning "men are weaker at fighting off colds" (caused by various viruses), the truth is considerably less clear cut. The article in Science is far more subtle in what it says about immunological differences between the sexes.

Immunologists readily admit that their nomenclature is cumbersome even for experts. The immune response that predominates in men, for example, is called the TH2 lymphocyte response (lymphocytes are the white blood cells) and the cells produce proteins called IL-4, IL-5, IL-6, IL-10, and transforming growth factor B. It's less exact, but

also less dull, to say women's immune systems are better at hand-to-hand combat and men prefer chemical warfare.

As yet, there aren't the studies to show that women are better at fighting off colds than men. Or any studies to show differences between the sexes in fighting real infections. There never will be, since it's not ethical to deliberately infect people in a controlled environment and see what happens. There is, however, evidence from vaccination that the immune systems of men and women behave differently. Typically girls have a more vigorous immune response than boys after being immunised against diseases.

There is also speculation that some differences may well have something to do with sex hormones; oestrogen and progesterone in women versus testosterone in men.

Oestrogen appears to have opposite effects at high and low levels. Some studies show women with

...women's immune systems are better at hand-to-hand combat and men prefer chemical warfare'

MS get worse symptoms just before their periods but that their disease goes into remission with pregnancy (when oestrogen levels are very high), while in rheumatoid arthritis, remissions may be even more marked during pregnancy.

In the U.S. there's been sufficient

interest in the issue of gender and autoimmunity for immunologists to set up a task force with what it says is an "aggressive research agenda."

Its chairwoman, Professor Caroline Whitacre from Ohio State University, says that they want researchers to always look at gender differences in their studies. More research may show, for example, whether women with MS should be treated at certain times in their menstrual cycles, or whether sex hormones themselves may be used to treat autoimmune diseases.

Whitacre says she'd like research into gender differences in melanomas and bowel cancer, since in both diseases the body has a go at mounting an immune response.

Differences in immunity between the genders will, at best, only ever explain a tiny bit of the variation between men and women's health.

The U.S. Task Force acknowledges that the environment and genetics (as ever) will be involved. Also under the microscope is the

common idea that women are generally sicker (in terms of non-life-threatening disease). A paper in Social Science and Medicine earlier this year says that an analysis of the General Household Survey showed no differences between men and women in reporting ill-health.

The much repeated hypothesis that men are more stoic, say the authors, is therefore not valid. They also cite a British study of 1694 volunteers at a research unit for the common cold (now closed) between 1984-9 which asked men and women to rate their colds on a severity scale. Each day a medically qualified observer also graded the clinical severity of their cold. Men, said the researchers, were much more likely than women to "over rate" their symptoms.

Time and more research will tell if the men's version of their sniffles actually do have a sound immunological basis.

— The Guardian

Fears of U.S. protectionism rise with trade deficit

WASHINGTON (R) — Record trade deficits and a congressional vote to slap quotas on steel imports are raising fresh worries that U.S. protectionist pressures are building despite a robust economy and a low unemployment rate.

"I am in the camp with those who are very nervous," said Christopher Parlin, a Washington trade lawyer and former U.S. trade representative official.

"The concern is what happens when the wonderfully positive economic period ends," he added. "If we've got this level of protectionism lathering now, it is very worrisome."

The U.S. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly last week for a bill that would curb steel imports for three years through quotas and tariffs.

The vote was a big victory for the United Steelworkers of Ameri-

ca, which lobbied lawmakers for months. The union argued that some 10,000 jobs were lost in the U.S. steel industry last year due to imports, and it fears more losses when a union contract with a job protection clause expires in July.

The strong showing in the House — 289-141 for the bill — likely caused discomfort for President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination next year, analysts said. The bill was backed by a large number of Democrats who stood with Clinton during his impeachment trial and by a key Democratic support group.

Record trade deficits are adding to administration worries.

The Commerce Department reported last week that the deficit in January rose to a record \$17 billion.

The report underscored predictions that

economic weakness in Asia, Latin America and Europe, and a strong U.S. economy, would result in a trade deficit this year topping last year's record \$169 billion deficit.

"If the trade deficit continues to increase, it is more likely that trade issues are going to play a larger role in the political race in 2000," said Judith Lee, an international trade attorney with the Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher law firm.

The steel workers union has now turned its attention to the Senate where West Virginia Democratic Senator Jay Rockefeller has introduced a similar quota bill that has attracted 14 co-sponsors.

Union President George Becker said last week he thought it would be difficult for Clinton to veto the legislation.

Many analysts say they do not expect the full Senate to go for a quota bill, but that lawmakers may alter it or opt for alternative legislation to address the steel issue in a way that does not violate World

Trade Organisation rules. The quota bill would violate international trade rules.

Russell Smith, an international trade attorney with Willkie Farr & Gallagher, said the campaign for congressional action launched last autumn by the steel workers and their companies has been effective.

"The campaign is having an effect in the Senate," he said. "There are things that they might not have been inclined to do that they may be more inclined to do as a sop to the industry and labour in lieu of a quota bill."

Analysts said the House vote signalled growing union muscle on the trade issue. For the past two years, union opposition to so-called fast track trade negotiation authority has kept it from passing the House of Representatives.

The bill, which would give the president authority to negotiate deals that could not be amended by Congress, is seen as having little chance of passing Congress over the opposi-

tion of labour unions until after the 2000 presidential election.

"Trade is a very real concern," said Thea Lee, international trade expert at the AFL-CIO, a federation of unions representing 13 million workers. "We're in a year where the trade deficit is likely to rise significantly and there is a lot of concern about the impact of globalisation on the labour market."

Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said Friday he was concerned about the message the congressional action would send to other countries that have resisted calls for trade barriers in the face of financial crises and economic recession.

"If we, the only major country in the world that really has a healthy economy, were to begin restricting access to our markets, it would create enormous pressure on other countries," Rubin told reporters. "If that of course were to happen on a global basis, that would have enormously adverse consequences for our exports."

Exchange Rates

Sunday, 21-03-99

ACCESS 484888

	US DOLLAR	EURO	YEN	POUND	FRANK	SCOTT	YEN	YEN	YEN
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1688	0.1927	1.8780	1.6387	0.1945	2.3190	0.2077	0.7080
BAHRAIN DINAR	5.2873	1.0000	1.0208	9.2485	8.2485	1.0000	12.2046	1.1005	3.7538
IRAN DINAR	5.1883	0.9796	1.0000	8.7454	9.5416	1.0000	12.0341	1.0781	3.6740
IRAN DINAR	0.9225	0.1005	0.1028	1.0000	0.8791	1.0000	1.2349	0.1106	0.3770
IRAN DINAR	0.8438	0.1022	0.1048	1.0000	0.8791	1.0000	1.2349	0.1106	0.3770
IRAN DINAR	5.1427	0.9708	0.9910	8.8578	9.4559	1.0000	12.2046	1.1005	3.7538
IRAN DINAR	0.4312	0.0814	0.0831	0.8088	0.7928	1.0000	1.2349	0.1106	0.3770
IRAN DINAR	4.8136	0.9087	0.9278	8.2539	8.2539	1.0000	12.2046	1.1005	3.7538
IRAN DINAR	21.2288	4.0075	4.0809	38.8874	39.0335	4.1280	49.2303	4.4102	15.0300
IRAN DINAR	1.4124	0.2896	0.2722	2.8825	2.5671	0.2746	3.2755	0.2934	1.0000
IRAN DINAR	0.8471	0.1637	0.1671	1.6283	1.5943	0.1686	2.0107	0.1801	0.6138
IRAN DINAR	2.5367	0.4789	0.4886	4.7636	4.6843	0.4833	5.8827	0.5320	1.7892
IRAN DINAR	2.0705	0.3908	0.3990	3.8883	3.8070	0.4026	4.8015	0.4301	1.4659
IRAN DINAR	8.5072	1.6059	1.6394	15.9784	15.5424	1.6542	19.7295	1.7673	6.2231
IRAN DINAR	1.8585	0.3127	0.3182	3.1109	3.0489	0.3221	3.8415	0.3441	1.1728
IRAN DINAR	2.0381	0.3385	0.3458	3.3674	3.2642	0.3498	4.2679	0.3936	1.3235
IRAN DINAR	11.5828	2.1884	2.2340	21.7711	21.3188	2.2542	26.8840	2.4084	8.2077
IRAN DINAR	25.1127	4.7408	4.8394	47.1613	46.1753	4.8832	58.2371	5.2171	17.7798
IRAN DINAR	32.3206	5.8788	10.0825	98.2573	96.2031	10.1739	121.3331	10.8884	37.0430
IRAN DINAR	2.2402	0.4229	0.4317	4.2870	4.1191	0.4357	5.1950	0.4554	1.5882
IRAN DINAR	0.7515	0.1478	0.1509	1.4840	1.4414	0.1519	1.7429	0.1581	0.5321
IRAN DINAR	0.7515	0.1478	0.1509	1.4840	1.4414	0.1519	1.7429	0.1581	0.5321
IRAN DINAR	17.6458	3.3688	3.4389	33.5138	32.8131	3.4761	41.3845	3.7074	12.6347
IRAN DINAR	2.1388	0.4039	0.4124	4.0188	3.9346	0.4161	5.0623	0.4445	1.5150
IRAN DINAR	1.2885	0.2448	0.2486	2.4348	2.3839	0.2521	3.0087	0.2893	0.9778

	US DOLLAR	EURO	YEN	POUND	FRANK	SCOTT	YEN	YEN	YEN
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.6280	0.5088	0.8822	0.1689	0.8527	0.4842	5.6244	1.0884
EURO	0.6139	1.0000	0.3418	0.4168	0.1019	0.5234	0.3534	4.4526	0.5988
YEN	1.7980	2.9257	1.0000	1.2252	0.2982	1.5314	0.8876	10.1014	1.9586
POUND	1.4889	2.3890	0.8182	1.0000	0.2454	1.2489	0.7344	8.2447	1.5970
FRANK	6.0291	6.8116	3.3538	4.1038	1.0000	5.1357	2.9795	39.8791	5.5616
SCOTT	117.2800	191.0481	65.3007	80.0055	19.4717	1.0000	57.9590	689.6250	127.7648
YEN	2.0235	3.2983	1.1287	1.3804	0.3380	1.7254	1.0000	11.3808	2.2444
YEN	8.5072	13.3703	4.5700	5.5891	1.3627	6.5954	4.0562	48.1831	8.8415
YEN	17.7798	28.9532	9.8887	12.1289	2.9519	15.1621	8.7867	100.0000	19.3932
YEN	37.0430	63.4390	20.6255	25.2688	6.1502	31.8551	18.3084	208.3432	40.3046
YEN	1.5880	2.5837	0.8831	1.0820	0.2833	1.3524	0.7838	8.9205	1.7278
YEN	2.2402	3.6111	1.2444	1.5047	0.4003	2.2182	1.4596	16.6110	3.2774
YEN	0.5321	0.8888	0.2983	0.3530	0.0883	0.4537	0.2830	3.5444	0.5770
YEN	12.6347	20.5819	7.0248	8.6191	2.0277	10.7311	5.2440	71.0821	13.7642
YEN	1.5150	2.4678	0.8438	1.0335	0.2515	1.2818	0.7487	8.5209	1.6004
YEN	0.9778	1.4933	0.5111	0.6282	0.1524	0.7827	0.4536	5.1828	1.0000

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

	US DOLLAR	EURO	YEN	POUND	FRANK	SCOTT	YEN	YEN	YEN
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Sri Lanka tea exports rise

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's tea exports grew by 4.6 per cent to retain the country's position as the world's largest exporter of the commodity, but revenues were short of expectations, trade officials said.

Sri Lanka's tea exports were 269.6 million kilograms in calendar 1998, up from 257 million kilograms in the previous year, tea broking firm John Keells Limited said.

Sri Lanka's main competitor, Kenya, was a close second with exports amounting to 264.2 million kilograms in 1998, John Keells Director Lalith Ramanayake said.



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- Should also be familiar with any ERP solutions implemented in a manufacturing facility with all of its related modules.
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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

United Financial Investment Company boosts aftertax profit by 89 per cent

THE UNITED Financial Investment Company (UFIC) hiked its pretax profit by 52 per cent last year to JD282,111 and its aftertax profit by 89 per cent to JD 250,284. Vice Chairman Mohammed Al Amad told the general assembly that the company achieved continued growth in profits since 1996 and that in 1998 it posted JD515,000 in net earnings from brokerage and trading in shares. The amount is 50 per cent higher than the net earnings registered in 1997.

Amad said the UFIC ranked second in terms of the volume of shares traded among all 27 brokerage firms operating at the Amman Stock Exchange. The volume amounted to JD124.86 million, 45 per cent more than the amount recorded in 1997. As such, the UFIC accounted for 15.9 per cent of the overall market volume in 1998.

"The company relied on its local and foreign investors (individuals and institutions) for its accomplishments," Amad said pointing out that the total

trading on behalf of clients amounted to JD110.6 million or 88 per cent of the overall trading carried out by UFIC. Trading for local clients stood at JD54.6 million and for foreign investors at JD56.0 million.

The vice chairman indicated that the company's portfolio of securities totalled JD1.2 million and that trading for the account of the portfolio amounted to JD14.31 million. The portfolio's gross profit stood at JD180,700 last year.

Sectorally, the banking sector accounted for 68.5 per cent of the investments followed by the industrial sector for 27 per cent. The services and insurance took 1.8 per cent and 2.7 per cent of the investments respectively.

The general assembly concluded its ordinary meeting by approving the distribution of dividends at the rate of eight per cent instead of nine per cent as recommended by the board of directors after amortising JD65,000 of goodwill (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

Number, value of bounced cheques reach record levels in 1998

THE NUMBER of cheques presented through clearing last year was a record 8.8 million compared to 8.6 million cheques during 1997. The amounts of these cheques were also a record as they jumped from JD10.8 billion in 1997 to JD11.2 billion in 1998.

Of the aforementioned number of cheques, 537,600 cheques bounced for various reasons compared to 460,000 cheques during 1997. The

amounts of the bounced cheques rose from JD434.7 million in 1997 to JD512.8 million last year.

The statistics, showed in the Central Bank monthly statistical bulletin, revealed that a total of 7.69 million cheques carrying a value of JD10.18 billion were presented for clearing in Amman while Irbid came in second place with 547,300 cheques valued at JD404.9 million (Al Dustour).

Majali sees large job opportunities at Irbid's Al Hassan Industrial Zone

RAMTHA (Petra) — The Al Hassan Industrial Zone near the northern town of Ramtha is expected this year to witness a major increase in the number of job opportunities available to Jordanians, said Amer Majali, director general of the Jordanian Industrial Estates Corporation, on Saturday.

According to Majali, 11,000 jobs will open up with approximately JD80 million in investments in the zone.

Majali said the new industrial projects are expected to be built on 344 dunums of land. He noted that the second phase of the zone's expansion is near completion, bringing the total area of the zone to 771 dunums.

He said 82 firms from Jordan, Arab countries and

foreign nations have submitted bids to acquire land for their projects. Twenty-five have already been issued licences to commence operations.

"With the latest addition of industries, the combined capital invested in the zone will reach JD200 million," Majali said noting that the zone employs 4,200 Jordanians.

He said most of the firms located in the industrial area fall within the Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ), from which industrialists export their products to U.S. markets free of customs duty, in accordance with a U.S.-Jordanian agreement.

In addition to the U.S. markets, Majali said the industrial zone is expected to boost exports to regional countries.

Qatar shelves \$4 billion LNG project with Enron

DOHA (R) — Qatar's energy minister has said his country had shelved a \$4 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) project with U.S. energy giant Enron Corp. due to "tight market" conditions.

"By logic, it is cancelled," Minister of Energy and Industry Abdullah Ben Hamad Al Attiyah told Reuters when asked whether the Enron project was scrapped.

Attiyah was speaking a day after he told an oil and gas conference: "We are not going to support any more grassroots projects."

"The global LNG market is becoming increasingly tight and competitive and I do not see scope for any new grassroots LNG project in Qatar," he told the conference. "We'll support the existing projects and concentrate on downstream ventures," he emphasised.

Qatar had signed a letter of intent with Enron for the \$4 billion project in 1995 to tap the North Field — the world's

largest single concentration of gas — and produce five million tonnes a year of LNG, destined for the Mediterranean and Indian markets.

But the project seemed jinxed from the very beginning.

Israel, which had signed a preliminary accord to buy half of the production, cancelled the deal within months of its signing.

This left Enron to focus on the burgeoning Indian market where it was setting up a gas-fired power plant in Maharashtra state. It planned to use 2.5 million tonnes a year of LNG at the power plant and sell the rest to other customers in the region.

But the entry of Mobil Corp. — a strong rival in the United States — and Qatar's second LNG producer Rasgas into the Indian market dashed its hopes to sell surplus gas there.

In December, Mobil and Ras Laffan LNG Co. (Rasgas) — in which Mobil has a 25 per cent stake — signed a prelimi-

nary pact to supply 7.5 million tonnes a year of LNG to India's Petronet LNG Ltd for 25 years.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar said they had agreed to build a gas network between the two states and Oman at a cost of between \$8 and \$10 billion, Abu Dhabi said.

The agreement, signed between the two countries' national oil companies, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and Qatar General Petroleum Corporation, says the money will be spent over the next seven years, according to an official statement.

This investment, which is open to foreign participation, will be spent on developing gas deposits in Qatar, laying 800-kilometre pipelines to take the gas to the UAE and Oman and the construction of storage reservoirs.

Industry experts in Abu Dhabi said the network could eventually be extended to other countries in the Gulf, like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Bank suggests seven-point plan to tackle Year 2000 Millennium Bug

THE MILLENNIUM Bug is now a commonly used term. While virtually everyone who needs to be aware of it seems to have got the message, many are still unconvinced they need to do much about it. The time has come to change the message from amber warning to red alert. The truth is, if a company has not yet made a start on correcting its computer hardware to ensure it is compliant with Year 2000, it is probably too late. Their only option is to throw everything away and start again. But most companies cannot afford to do that, and they still have to rely on their suppliers, their distribution and their utilities. So what is the answer for them?

Much of what one reads about Millennium Bug now has a certain familiar ring to it. That is because it is basically saying the same thing, in different ways. Those are the things that could happen. This is the reason behind the problem. That is what you can do. Now is the time to take notice, and act. This should tell us something.

The task is long-term, exhaustive, and not restricted to business or individuals in isolation. To take HSBC Group as an example, work started over a decade ago to address the various issues arising from the Millennium Bug, and to plan how to cope with them. In the British Bank of the Middle East, which is part of the HSBC Group, testing of all systems has been going on for over two years to ensure that they are all Year 2000 compliant. The bank has also been checking that the same is true of essential suppliers and their products and services. Substantially all lines of programming code in the Bank's computer systems have been reviewed and amended or

replaced as necessary. The great majority of the systems have been tested and are now in use. The small number of systems which remain non-compliant are due for replacement by mid 1999.

This process has been completed not only for the Bank's core business, but also for the other functions within the business which use information technology, such as centralised data systems, inventory systems, networks and building management systems. All of them have the capability of malfunctioning or failing as we reach the threshold of the new Millennium, and all need to be thoroughly tested and if necessary changed to ensure a seamless transition.

In 1998 the Bank issued a booklet entitled "Beat the Millennium Bug." It can be found on the Bank's Website at www.britishbank.com. It describes a structure for recognising the issue raised by the Year 2000 and ways to address them. In particular a seven-point plan is suggested which the Bank itself has followed and which is applicable to all businesses, even those with little or no computer technology as they will also continue to depend upon their suppliers. The fantasy that a company as basic as a pottery, using only clay and manual wheels, need not fear the Millennium Bug, ignores the supplies of clay it will require, how its products will be distributed, and how it will communicate with its market.

The 7-point plan is summed up as follows:
Commitment, Structure, Assessment, Planning, Conversion, Testing and Control. Everything has to start somewhere, and with the Millennium Bug it is the acceptance that there is going to be a problem and

something needs to be done about it. A commitment needs to be made at the top level of the company to set up a management structure and a process to address the issues, and to decide a programme of time-scales, necessary actions and budget. Most importantly a commitment needs to be made to start work on the programme without delay. The structure of a plan needs to look at the business policy towards the Millennium Bug, and needs to allocate resources to it. A Programme Manager needs to be appointed, and business processes need to be given priorities.

Perhaps the key phase of the plan is the assessment of how the company is affected by the Millennium Bug, not only in the sense of its own procedures and use of technology, but also the supply chain it depends on. Perhaps the most difficult decision is what resources are needed and what kind of expertise has to be bought in. Most companies are going to have to rely on outside technical help, and this is getting booked up fast! Once the scale of the problem and the resources needed have been identified, planning is an essential tool to ensure that the action taken is right both for the company and for the goals it is trying to achieve. Conversion and testing are of course at the implementation end of the process, and if everything before them has been done carefully and logically, they should be the elements that bring a sense of achievement and reassurance to the owners of the plan. And finally control is the point at which the company can ensure that whatever has been taken is contained and not allowed to deteriorate by the use of non-compliant technology, or the use of uncertain suppliers.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MARCH 22, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're under a bit of stress this morning. A situation others might find simple has you tossed into a frenzy. It could be leftover tension from yesterday that's causing the problem. Heed a gentle friend's advice to settle down. Everything will work out well, and you don't have to make sure it happens. Let others take care of you for a change.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're in for a rude awakening. Something you thought you had all figured out may not go quite as planned. It may even backfire on you. Also, watch out for accidents caused by impetuous behaviour. Not to worry. Everything calms down by dinnertime.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You may have to turn down an invitation this morning due to a lack of funds. Don't despair. This might be just the motivation you need. Maybe you're not using enough of your natural talents. Remember the old line about finding a need and filling it? That's still a good way to make a fortune.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Something you start around midday is practically guaranteed to succeed. Knowing that in advance, obviously you'll start as many things around then as possible. You'll also be good with words at that time. Don't be intimidated by a gruff character. Just relax. You'll wow 'em.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's an accident waiting to happen this morning and it wouldn't necessarily be your fault. Just because you're a good driver doesn't mean everybody else on the road is. Drive defensively. By the way, it's a good time to make sure you have enough insurance coverage.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A meeting should go well this morning, after an initial hassle. The confrontation is about where to get the money. You get to be the moderator. Coax them out of the emotional level by presenting the facts over and over again.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're looking sharp again today, but your patience may be short. Try not to get too irritated with an older person who has a tendency to whine. That's especially true if this person also happens to be the one who signs your paycheck. Stifle even the least little snide comment.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There's a bit of a hassle first thing this morning, but then conditions start to mellow out. By afternoon, you'll see the fruits of your labour begin to materialise. The idea you've been trying to bring about will turn out to be even better than you'd hoped.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You were thinking that your goal was unattainable because you didn't have enough education. Now the education you're acquiring is making the goal look not only possible, but practically easy. Next, you need to confront whether you're actually willing to have a fantasy turn into reality.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you want to attract the best person for you, tone down your approach a little. The one you need is a quiet, sensitive type. You have a tendency to get a little bit bossy. If you've got the perfect person in your life already, make sure to show your appreciation.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The difficulty you're facing isn't mechanical. That's the problem — it's emotional. No need to panic. Just remember to be sympathetic. If you can't muster that, at least listen patiently. Then suggest that the job be completed. It's worth a try.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'd like to do something very special for a loved one this evening, but you're afraid of the cost. Don't worry. You're feeling extravagant, but you also have natural inhibitors that will prevent you from going over budget. Everything will work out well.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Credit Suisse Group posts 665% rise in '98 net profit

ZURICH (AFP) — Credit Suisse Group has announced a 665 per cent jump in net profit to 3.1 billion Swiss francs (\$3.1 billion) for 1998, despite heavy investment banking costs from the Russian crisis.

Given the financial market turbulence in the past year, the group's result is "satisfactory," Credit Suisse said in a statement.

Credit Suisse returned to profit in 1998 with a consolidated net profit of 397 million Swiss francs after a loss of 2.1 billion francs in 1996.

Credit Suisse had a "very good start to 1999" and said it plans to achieve "further substantial progress in reaching its performance targets."

Russia's economic crisis hammered the results of investment banking arm Credit Suisse First Boston (CSFB), which had built a strong market position in the country.

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Code	Price	Change
BANKS		
ARAB BK	220.000	+0.45%
NTL BK	1.420	+0.70%
BL OF JORDAN	1.280	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST BK	0.940	0.00%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.380	+0.72%
THE HOUSING BK	2.780	+0.36%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.670	+1.27%
JO. GULF BK	0.680	+1.54%
SEST EL MAL	0.830	+4.78%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.820	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	286.410	+0.37%
INSURANCE		
JO. FRENCH INS	2.700	-1.11%
INSURANCE INDEX	126.490	-0.15%
SERVICES		
ELECTRIC POWER	1.640	0.00%
ARAB INTL HOTELS	4.740	0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.920	0.00%
JO. INTL TRADING CENT.	0.230	0.00%
AL-RAY	7.080	-0.14%
COMMODORE	1.080	-1.85%
AL-ZARGA FOR EDU	0.980	-2.02%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.020	+0.98%
SERVICES INDEX	111.480	0.00%
INDUSTRY		
CEMENT	3.640	-0.55%
PHOSPHATE	2.280	+3.05%
ARAB POTASH	4.280	-2.10%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.880	+0.18%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.890	+1.67%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.470	+2.72%
DAR AL DAWA	6.090	+0.49%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.680	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0.380	+1.01%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.680	+3.57%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.380	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.280	-4.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1.080	0.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.980	+3.16%
NTL CABLE	0.810	-1.96%
SULPHUR - CHEMICALS	0.420	-2.38%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.240	+1.61%
KAWTHER	0.810	+5.88%
IL-ZAY	1.280	0.00%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.880	0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.420	0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.790	+1.27%
INDUSTRY INDEX	96.120	-0.41%

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New No. 1 Moya advances while former top players fall

KEY BISCAIYNE (AFP) — Carlos Moya won his first match as the official World No. 1, but the woman who first put Spain at the top of tennis, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, had no such luck.

Sanchez, the fifth seed, joined fellow former world number-ones Andre Agassi and Boris Becker on the casualty list at the Lipton Championships.

Agassi, who suffered a hamstring strain at Scottsdale in the first week of March which kept him out of the Champions Cup at Indian Wells last week, was uncharacteristically overpowered by Slovakian Dominik Hrbaty, ranked 40th in the world.

Hrbaty's 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 victory gave him his second big win of the year, after his triumph over Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov at Marseille last month.

"He was taking some chances," Agassi said. "I didn't think his backhand was going to be such a strong shot. We got in a lot of backhand-to-backhand and he managed to stretch me a little bit. That surprised me."

"He served pretty well at some key times. He was willing to pull the trigger on his forehand, his big shot."

Agassi double faulted nine times, including on the last two points of the match.

"My movement was a bit sub-par," Agassi said. "Not feeling completely a hundred per cent. You know, I just have to kind of suck this one up and figure out what I'm going to, you know, do to make it better next time."

Becker, playing only his third match of a year in which he plans to make Wimbledon his farewell to the game, was noticeably lacking in fire and fitness.

Once he dropped his serve at 5-5 in the first set with three double faults, Russian Marat Safin was easily on his way to a 7-5, 6-0 victory.

Even so, Safin, who was 11 when Becker was No. 1 in 1991, said the German veteran's quality was still clear.

"He's capable of playing incredible tennis," Safin said. "If he had won the last set, the result could have been 7-6, 6-0 for him."

Anne Kremer disposed of Sanchez, winner of the Lipton women's title in 1992 and 1993 — 1-6, 6-4, 6-1.

There was good news for a string of favourites, however.

Moya, who assured him-



Anna Kournikova of Russia hits a forehand against Kristina Brandi of the U.S. in a second round match of the Lipton Championships in Key Biscayne, Florida. Kournikova won 6-7, 6-0, 6-2 (AFP photo)



Amanda Coetzer of South Africa hits the ball to Elena Tatarkova of the Ukraine during their match at The Lipton Tennis Championships in Key Biscayne, Florida. Coetzer beat Tatarkova 6-2, 7-5 (AFP photo)

self of the No. 1 ranking by reaching the final at Indian Wells, then lost the final to Mark Philippoussis before his new status was official on Monday, made amends with a victory over Italian Davide Sanguinetti.

Sampras, who lost in the second round last week as he conceded his top ranking, defeated compatriot Jim Courier 6-3, 7-6 (7/3). Fourth-seeded Spaniard Alex Corretja also advanced, while on the women's side second-seeded Lindsay Davenport of the United States, fourth-seeded Czech Jana Novotna and sixth seed and defending champion Venus Williams of the United States all advanced.

Angry Agassi swears off Davis Cup

KEY BISCAIYNE (AFP) — Andre Agassi, angered by the sacking of U.S. Davis Cup team Doctor George Fareed, said Saturday he would never play in the international tennis tournament again.

"I'm done with it," Agassi said. "I never say never (but) I'm never playing again."

Agassi said the dismissal of Fareed, a personal friend, was just the latest in a string of insensitive moves by the U.S. Tennis Association (USTA).

"That's the last straw for me," Agassi said. "He goes to the wall for you during Davis Cup weeks, away from Davis Cup weeks. Just another example of how players aren't consulted about anything that happens."

Agassi was angered last year by the USTA's decision to host the semifinal tie against Italy in Milwaukee, instead of somewhere in the U.S. southwest where he could play and keep a charity commitment in Las Vegas.

Agassi's remarks, in the wake of his second-round loss to Dominik Hrbaty in the Lipton Championships were put down in part to disappointment by Davis Cup coach Tom Gullikson.

"It might be an emotional reaction to the loss," Gullikson said. "I hope he'll reconsider his position."

USTA executive director Rick Ferman said Fareed's exit was the result of a restructuring of the medical staff.

Jim Courier, one of the players who has carried the U.S. standard in the absence of Agassi and perennial Davis Cup no-show Pete Sampras, admitted he was surprised by Fareed's firing.

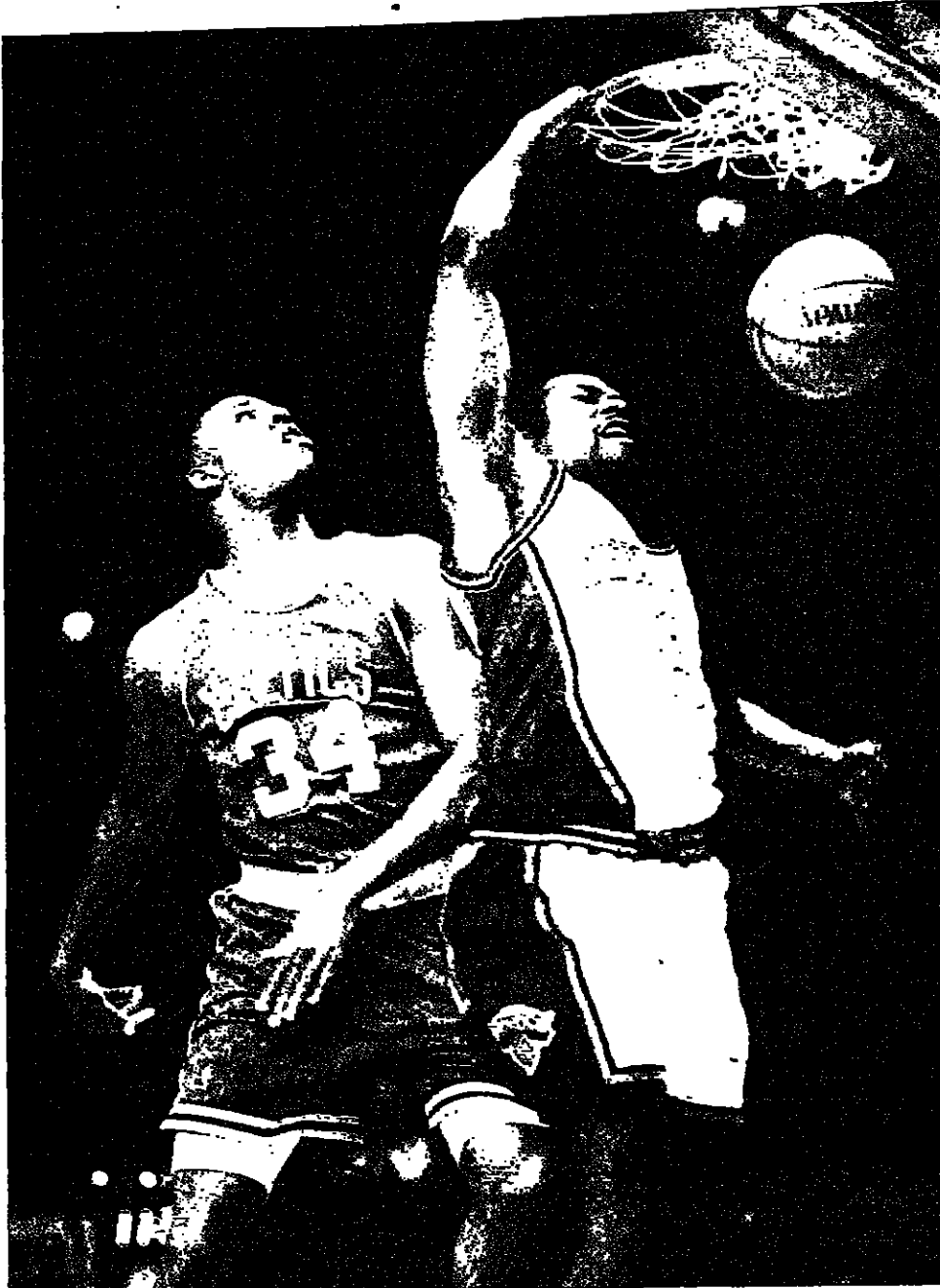
"We'll miss him a lot," Courier said.

The United States faces Britain at Birmingham, England, in the first round next month.

Britain will be led by Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman. On Monday, Gullikson is expected to announce officially a squad led by Courier and Todd Martin.

Until the Fareed incident, Agassi said he had expected to return eventually to Davis Cup play.

"You always want to have more great memories," he said. "I was going to play the rest by ear, knowing a lot depends on where my game is, what I need for it, scheduling, all that other stuff."



Latrell Sprewell of the New York Knicks (R) slam dunks the ball past Paul Pierce of the Boston Celtics (L) in the second quarter at Madison Square Garden in New York (AFP photo)

Barkley carries Rockets past Suns

HOUSTON (R) — Charles Barkley trashed his former team after losing to them six days ago and wasn't about to let the Rockets get burned by the Suns again on Saturday.

Barkley poured in a season-high 35 points, including the first six in overtime, to carry Houston to a 103-93 victory over the Phoenix Suns.

Barkley also grabbed 18 rebounds in avenging Houston's only loss in the last seven games. After that setback in Phoenix, the outspurred forward said the Rockets should never lose to a team like the Suns, who he viewed as "not on our level."

An inspired Barkley shot 13-of-21 from the field and 9-of-12 at the line Saturday.

"Charles was just phenomenal," Houston coach Rudy Tomjanovich said. "He did it every way he could. He took it to the basket, he got to the free throw line and he passed the ball out of the double team."

The teams entered overtime knotted at 91-91 before Barkley made a layup and pair of jumpers to open a 97-91 bulge with 3:15 to go.

Scottie Pippen, who finished with 14 points, sealed the win with a 3-pointer that made it 101-93 with 56 seconds left.

Hakeem Olajuwon contributed 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets.

Tom Gugliotta scored 22 points but just two after the third quarter for the Suns, who took a 77-68 lead into the fourth.

"I just had a good night," Barkley said. "Every night somebody has to step up, and tonight was my night." In New York, Patrick Ewing

marked his return with 11 points, 11 rebounds and three blocks and red-hot Latrell Sprewell led the way with 27 points as the Knicks pounded the Boston Celtics 96-78.

The Knicks star centre had missed the last seven games with an Achilles tendon injury.

Sprewell scored 18 of his points on sizzling 7-of-8 shooting in the second quarter, when the Knicks took control by outscoring Boston 30-15.

In Washington, Juwan Howard and Mitch Richmond combined for 57 points as the Wizards crushed the Cleveland Cavaliers 113-83.

Howard had 28 points and 15 rebounds, making 12-of-17 shots, while Richmond scored 29 points, draining 5-of-7 from 3-point range.

Rod Strickland handed out 16 assists as Washington rolled to its highest point total and widest margin of victory of the season.

In Atlanta, Glenn Robinson hit a 14-foot jumper with 53 seconds left to put Milwaukee on top for good and Ray Allen scored all eight of his points in the final 18 seconds as the Bucks held off the Hawks 83-77.

Robinson scored 21 points and Dell Curry and Chris Gatling added 12 apiece for Milwaukee.

Allen, who missed his first eight shots, sank six free throws in an 11-second span down the stretch.

In Miami, the Indiana Pacers took advantage of the early exit of Alonzo Mourning to post a 94-89 victory and move within one game of first-place Heat in the Eastern Conference.

With the imposing Mourning out of the way,

Indiana forwards Chris Mullin and Antonio Davis scored 17 points each. The pair also combined for 19 rebounds to halt Miami's 11-game home winning streak.

Mourning, the Heat's top scorer and rebounder, was ejected with 5:11 to play in the second quarter after being hit with two technical fouls for arguing a call.

In Dallas, Gary Trent came off the bench to collect 22 points and 11 rebounds and help the Mavericks to a 104-90 victory over the Sacramento Kings.

Steve Nash and Michael Finley also scored 22 points apiece in the Mavericks' offensive explosion as Dallas won for just the third time in nine games.

In Vancouver, Tim Duncan scored 24 points, including the first four in overtime, and pulled down 14 rebounds to lead the San Antonio Spurs to a 92-88 victory over the Grizzlies.

Mario Elie chipped in 16 points and Sean Elliott scored 11 of his 14 in the fourth quarter as San Antonio won for the 10th time in 11 games.

Vancouver's Shareef Abdur-Rahim, who led all scorers with 25 points, hit a running jumper as time expired to send the game into overtime.

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Jordan beats Antranig Club

AMMAN — Jordan's men's basketball team on Saturday beat Lebanon's Antranig Club 87-82 during a match held in Beirut as part of the national team's training camp there. Antranig includes three professional players; two from the U.S. and one from Mali. It was the Kingdom's third win after beating Neptune Club 98-90 and Kahraba 77-72. The national team was scheduled to play their last match against the Lebanon's Al Tadmoun. Jordan lost two matches 65-60 to Homentmen and 88-78 to Wardieh.

Kingdom wins women's doubles

AMMAN — Jordan's Teryana Najjar and Alia Tuffaha won the golden medal in the women's doubles at Arab Tennis-Federation's Championship in Beirut. They beat Egyptian Besant Othman and Nivine Atef 25-23, 21-23 and 21-19. In men's doubles, Mustafa Reda and Iyad Maknai lost their chance to qualify for the semifinals after losing 19-12, 12-21 and 21-15 to Lebanon's Mohammad Habash and Joseph Shalhoub.

Amman hosts football qualifiers

AMMAN — Jordan will host the Group 3 Asian qualifiers for the Sydney Olympics on July 1-12 at King Abdullah Stadium in Quweismeh. Local dailies said a number of companies offered the Jordan Football Association to market the event, which will include six matches grouping Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Handball team concludes camp

AMMAN — The Kingdom's men's handball team beat Croatia's Vatriv Tivar, one of the premier league's club, 23-21 in a friendly match held in the city of Zagreb as part of the team's training camp in preparation of the Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament. The national team lost against Slovenia Youth 20-30, and was scheduled on Saturday to play its last friendly Saturday before concluding a week-long training camp.

Iraq beats Jordan in volleyball

AMMAN — Although the men's volleyball team provided a notable performance full of tactics, it was defeated 3-0 by its Iraqi counterpart in a friendly match held on Saturday at the Palace of Sports. The national team will play another friendly against the Iraqi team on Monday as part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Hosting 9th Pan-Arab Games is a challenge for us all — Mamsar

Japanese government to provide equipment; unique rewards for medal winners

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — Hosting the Pan-Arab Games is a challenge for all Jordanians and all efforts will be mobilised to finish facilities on time and be ready for the event. Minister of Sports and Youth Mohammad Kheir Mamsar told a press conference late Saturday.

In his first meeting with the sports media, Mamsar said the two pressing issues now were the competitive level of the Kingdom's teams and acquiring equipment to upgrade facilities with electronic timing machines and other requirements.

"Apart from gymnastics, no equipment has been ordered from abroad yet. We are late in that regard," said the minister.

He said Japan had pledged its support and offered to provide equipment as the unofficial countdown begins for 9th and final Games this century — renamed Al Hussein Tournament.

Mamsar noted that His Majesty King Abdullah and the government had made the Aug. 15-31 Games one of their priorities and that medal winners would receive prizes and rewards that had never been offered before.

The minister said that 17 countries had confirmed participation, 15 of which had even confirmed numbers and events.

The Higher Organising Committee (HOC) was awaiting word from Bahrain and the UAE. The only Arab countries not taking part were Somalia, Djibouti and the Comoros Islands.

"We will work for all

Arabs to be a part of the Al Hussein Tournament," Mamsar said adding that officials from participating countries would visit Jordan on May 15 to inspect facilities.

According to officials, belated confirmation by some countries was mainly due to the preference of professional athletes to participate in the World Athletics Championships which coincide with the Pan-Arab Games. Officials expected the strain between Gulf countries and Iraq to also affect the Games.

Mamsar said over 3,500 athletes were slated to take part in 26 events (compared to 19 events in 20 sports in the 1997 Beirut Games) noting that no event will be cancelled even if the number of competing teams is less than the minimum required.

HRH Prince Faisal, the newly-designated head of the HOC chaired a meeting earlier in the day reviewing work completed so far and setting a short-term agenda until the opening of the Games.

Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Majali, head of the Ministerial Committee following up the Games, underlined that all involved officials and sectors would spare no effort to make the 9th Pan-Arab Games a success and worthy of carrying the name Al Hussein Tournament in memory of the late King Hussein who passed away on Feb. 7.

Mamsar explained that the HOC had set five phases of work: the first two phases included naming Jordan as host and preliminary organi-



sational work.

He said the third phase, now underway, includes preparing facilities and teams and will run until the opening of the Games. The fourth will cover the duration of the Games and will be followed by the fifth phase of evaluation.

The minister said the official countdown would begin on May 15 when most of construction work is expected to be completed including maintenance at various venues.

Officials say construction work is on schedule, mainly the JD4 million multi-purpose indoor stadium with a 7,000-seat capacity, the Olympic-size swimming pool, and maintenance work on the track and field stadium.

Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) officials have expressed concern that a host of administrative and organisational issues seem to have overshadowed the lax attitude of some federations overseeing the training of athletes — a key priority as host country.

The last regional event Jordan took part in was the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok in December, where Jordan only managed

five medals, four by the taekwondo team. The rest of the athletes failed to even match their own national records.

The minister said preparing Jordan's teams and athletes is now the top priority as some federations started late. "They still have five months and if they are serious and train hard, they should be more than ready."

The participating countries are, in addition to the host, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan and Palestine. Oman and Lebanon have not finalised the nature of their participation.

Mamsar told reporters that a sports seminar will be held on the sidelines of the Games and will be followed by a general meeting of sports officials from all sectors to discuss a new strategy to ensure a qualitative leap in Jordanian sports including amending regulations governing it.

The Jordanian government had initially earmarked JD11 million for the Games which was later raised to JD18 million. Additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid was secured by exempting Jordan from the 50 per cent Arab Sports

Federation margin of profit on promotion and television coverage.

The minister said around JD3 million was expected in revenue and the Council of Arab Sports Ministers, which has so far granted \$500,000 in sponsorship, had promised to get additional funding from the Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council.

He explained that Jordan bears a heavy financial burden because it has had to prepare the Games in less than 20 months. "After Beirut hosted the 1997 Games the decision to move the Games back to 1999 instead of 2001 made our task more difficult. It is a challenge even if you are financially capable," he noted.

The minister said the same committees working on facilities in Amman will now work to do a similar job in Irbid which will host a third of the events.

He said veteran sportsmen and officials will be part of the Games to award medal winners and meet with delegation officials.

"This Hussein Tournament is for all Jordanians. Our veterans, officials, and sports clubs will also have an active role in making it a success," Mamsar said national team players and officials will be rewarded following the Games and their allowances during training will be raised.

The Amman Games will be followed by the first Arab Paralympics. HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd was named as director of the Paralympics which will be held Sept. 9-20.

Last week, Mamsar surprised observers when he named Bassam Haroun as the new director of the Hussein Tournament replacing Isam Aridah who held the post since Jordan was named host country.

The timing and the move surprised most observers including members of the HOC which had recommended Aridah's appointment by then head of the committee HRH Prince Abdullah.

Haroun, who was deputy chairman of the Games Technical Committee, took over the top job overseeing the many subcommittees organising the event at a crucial time with officials calling for urgent measures to end preparations on time.

However, one of the major obstacles facing the Games was solved last week when UAE TV announced that it would lend Jordan Television the necessary equipment to cover the event after it was estimated that JTV needed JD6 million to acquire its own equipment.

The resolving of the coverage issue paved the way for the signing of the promotion and marketing rights agreement with the Saudi firm RAF for \$1.5 million paid to Jordan in addition to 70 per cent of any additional income.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games last summer, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help in construction of sports facilities destroyed during the civil war.

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New York	96	Boston	78	Ostend	0	Ekeren	1
Washington	113	Cleveland	83	Lokeren	2	Lommel	1
Milwaukee	83	Atlanta	77	Lierse	6	St. Truiden	0
Indiana	94	Miami	89	Genk	3	Mouscron	0
Dallas	104	Sacramento	90	Gent	2	Westerlo	0
Houston	103	Phoenix	93 (OT)				
San Antonio	92	Vancouver	88 (OT)				
French League				Portuguese League			
Auxerre	0	Paris St Germain	1	Maritimo	1	Sporting Lisbon	3
Bordeaux	1	Strasbourg	0	Salgueiros	1	FC Porto	3
Le Havre	1	Lyon	0				
Rennes	1	Toulouse	1				
Metz	0	Lens	1				
Marseille	4	Lorient	1				
Montpellier	0	Sochaux	0				
English Premiership				Spanish League			
Arsenal	2	Coventry	0	Espanyol	1	Athletic Bilbao	1
Blackburn	3	Wimbledon	1				
Leeds	4	Derby	1				
Nottm Forest	1	Middlesbrough	2				
Southampton	1	Sheff Wed	0				
West Ham	2	Newcastle	0				
Dutch League							
C/Leeuwarden	1	MVV Maastricht	0				
AZ Alkmaar	0	Fortuna Sittard	3				
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Paris-Saint Germain's Bruno Rodriguez (L) scores the first goal for PSG against Auxerre at Abbe Deschamps stadium. PSG won 1-0 (AFP photo)

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Chechen President Maskhadov survives assassination bid

GROZNY (R) — The president of Russia's breakaway republic of Chechnya, Aslan Maskhadov, narrowly survived an assassination attempt on Sunday when an explosion occurred near his motorcade, his press service said.

Maskhadov and senior Russian and Chechen officials broadly linked the blast to a Friday explosion in the main market of the capital of a neighbouring Caucasus Republic and said both were intended to destabilise the fragile region.

Maskhadov was unhurt by the explosion in central Grozny, which rocked the president's motorcade as it passed by, said the director of the national security service, Ibrahim Khulygov.

No one was killed, he

said. "Somehow the blast did not work as planned. Thank God, the president was not injured," he said.

"A few people in the bodyguard received light wounds."

The press service said four people were wounded, and RIA news agency said the blast took place at 4:45 p.m. Moscow time (1345 GMT) when Maskhadov was returning from a meeting with oil industry officials.

Television pictures showed a crater about three metres wide from the explosion, which occurred about 200 metres from the presidential residence, agencies said.

RIA news agency quoted Maskhadov in a television address about two hours

after the blast as blaming forces within Chechnya with links in Russia for the attack.

"Be ready for everything, since measures will be taken to stabilise the situation in the Caucasus to call off or delay elections, forcing an emergency situation in the Caucasus republics," he warned citizens.

He said the blast and another which ripped through a market in the town of Vladikavkaz in the neighbouring Russian republic of North Ossetia on Friday, killing more than 50 people, were "links of a single chain," Interfax news agency reported.

RIA quoted a federal security service spokesman as agreeing there was a link but denying any involve-

ment by Russian state forces.

The leader of Chechnya, which waged a separatist war against Moscow until 1996, is under pressure from powerful military commanders who accuse him of being too conciliatory towards Moscow and want to set up a strictly Islamic state based on Sharia law.

Maskhadov, who also wants independence for the breakaway, has been expected to hold talks soon with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov in Moscow on the tense political situation in the Caucasus region.

Maskhadov survived a similar attack last July when a car bomb exploded near his motorcade.

Israeli court confirms refusal to extradite U.S. murder suspect

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's supreme court confirmed Sunday its refusal to extradite an Israeli-American teenager wanted for murder in the United States.

Deputy Chief Justice Shlomo Goren rejected a request by Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein for the court to review its Feb. 25 decision against extraditing Samuel Sheinbein, 18, judicial officials said.

The court's refusal means that Sheinbein will go on trial in Israel, and he will be charged in a Tel Aviv court Monday.

The supreme court said Israeli law prohibits the extradition of Israeli citizens to other countries. Sheinbein, an American Jew, is an Israeli by birth through his father, who was born in pre-state Israel, the court said.

He had never visited Israel before fleeing two days after the mutilated body of an acquaintance, 19-year-old Alfredo Enrique Tello, was found in the garage of an unoccupied house in a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C., in September 1997.

Sheinbein has been under arrest since his arrival.

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno expressed her disappointment last month at the Israeli supreme court's decision, and Rubinstein then asked the court to rehear the case because the decision violated an extradition treaty with the United States.

The Sheinbein case has strained Israeli-U.S. ties, with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright personally calling for his extradition and some U.S. Congress members threatening to hold U.S. aid to Israel if the youth was not turned over.

Hillary Clinton in Egypt on first leg of North Africa tour

CAIRO (AFP) — U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton toured Islamic landmarks here with her daughter Chelsea on the start Sunday of her first visit to Egypt and a North Africa tour to campaign for women's rights.

From Egypt, the first lady will visit Tunisia and camp in the Moroccan desert before wrapping up on April 1 a tour also devoted to promoting U.S. ties with the Arab World.

Clinton's first stop was at the magnificent Citadel overlooking Cairo built by Salah Al Din Al Ayubi, the great Islamic military leader who liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders.

Accompanied by the Secretary General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities Gaballah Ali Gaballah the two Americans then went down the hill to the Fatimid quarter of the Egyptian capital, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at a mosque

recently restored with U.S. funds.

The Salih Tala'i mosque's minbar, the marble altar-like structure where the prayer leader preaches to the faithful, was restored with a \$2.5-million grant by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The money also was used to deal with underground water that was threatening the foundations of the mosque built in 1161.

During her stay here, Clinton is scheduled to dedicate a new hospital in Cairo, announce a new maternal health and paediatric programme and discuss family planning at a Luxor clinic.

On Monday, Clinton tours Old Christian Cairo and Ben Ezra Synagogue.

She will address students at the American University in Cairo on Tuesday before flying to the southern Nile resort

of Luxor where she will visit Karnak Temple and other Pharaonic landmarks.

In Tunisia Thursday, Clinton will visit an education and training centre for youths in Tunis that also runs a credit programme for business women.

She will address women's organisations on the work to be done to improve women's rights and visit religious sites in Kairouan on Friday.

In Morocco, Clinton will speak at an education conference, visit a rural health clinic and talk about religious tolerance in Marrakesh. She will also go to Fez to inaugurate a maternity ward, see a U.S.-supported low-income housing project and spend the night in the desert.

Clinton arrived here earlier in the day and was greeted at the capital's international airport by Cairo Governor Abdul Rahim Shehata.

Turkish PM Ecevit hit by parliamentary ambush

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit cut short an election campaign trip to rush to the capital on Sunday after planned April elections were endangered by a parliamentary ambush.

With Ecevit and his parliamentary backer Mesut Yilmaz out of town campaigning, a group of dissident secularist deputies proposed a motion calling for the polls to be postponed.

Then the main opposition Islamists closed the trap, pledging to back the motion, despite having announced on Friday that they would not support any such move.

"I have received negative and surprising news from Ankara and cannot complete my programme in Izmir," Ecevit said in a written statement issued in the western city.

Political crises have plagued Turkey in recent years. A string of weak coalitions have presided over Turkey's estrangement from Europe while the Islamist opposition

and secularist army squabble over the role of religion in politics.

Deputies of Ecevit's ruling party and its backers attempted a rear-guard action against Sunday's motion, mobbing the desk of Speaker Yasin Hatipoglu.

Government deputies shouted and surrounded the speaker's chair, forcing Hatipoglu to close the day's session of parliament. The assembly is scheduled to vote on a separate opposition bid to topple Ecevit's government on Monday.

"Since the safety of the chair is not secure I am closing the session ahead of tomorrow's vote on the censure motion against Prime Minister Ecevit," Hatipoglu said.

But the opposition managed to force their motion onto the parliament's agenda.

The opposition appears unlikely to amass the 276 votes needed to force Ecevit to resign in that vote. It may be followed by debate of the motion to delay the general

elections.

The motion calls for polls in October 2000, leaving only local council elections to be held in April. For that the opposition only need a simple majority of the chamber, a figure they reached comfortably last week.

But government allies say the motion is unconstitutional and pledge to take the fight to preserve the election date to the constitutional court.

"Even if the motion to delay elections is passed we will appeal," conservative MP Saffet Beduk Arkan told Reuters as Sunday's session closed.

Ecevit and his two right-wing backers oppose any delay in the polls, arguing that would bring political chaos to the country. They are backed by the powerful armed forces.

The main stock index rose last week on optimism Ecevit could stick to his electoral timetable. The latest uncertainty seems likely to shake the traditionally volatile stock exchange.

S. Arabia, Iraq in war of words over pilgrimage

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia and Iraq waged a war of words on Sunday over the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca after Baghdad pulled back some 18,000 pilgrims from the border.

While sanctions-hit Baghdad accused Riyadh of refusing to release its frozen assets to finance the pilgrimage, the Saudi kingdom charged that Iraq was trying to make political capital out of one of the pillars of Islam.

Kuwaiti newspapers chipped in to blame Iraq for what it called a "mother of all scandals" in a mocking reference to the 1991 Gulf War which Baghdad dubbed the "Mother of All Battles".

"Even the pilgrimage has not escaped political exploitation by the Baghdad regime," said the Saudi daily Al Jazira, which like other Riyadh papers reflects the official view of the Gulf kingdom.

It said Muslims around the world were "shocked by the strange attitude of Iraq which recalled its pilgrims and deprived them of making the pilgrimage" despite

King Fahd's offer to cover their expenses.

A Gulf diplomat in Riyadh said the Iraqi move was based on an assessment that "Saudi Arabia would emerge with political gains" if Baghdad accepted the king's help.

But a Baghdad official daily, Al Jumhuriya, insisted Sunday that Iraq would "never accept charity" from anyone.

Saudi authorities "played the same game as the United States which through its representative in the [U.N. sanctions] 661 committee rejected Iraq's demands" to use U.N.-controlled Iraqi funds for the pilgrimage.

After turning down a compromise with the United Nations, Iraq tried to recover frozen assets held in Saudi banks but also failed to secure a deal with Riyadh.

"The hateful criminals are acting as if the Iraqi people's deprivation of food and medicine... was not enough," said Al Jumhuriya, referring to a U.N. embargo

in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Some 18,000 Iraqi pilgrims entered Saudi Arabia overland on Friday. They crossed back the next day, snubbing the king's offer to pay for their trip to Mecca, in western Saudi Arabia.

An Iraqi official told reporters in Baghdad that one of the pilgrims had died "because of the absence of medical care from the Saudi side" at the tent camp near the desert border post of Arar.

The Saudi interior minister told reporters that the kingdom had told Iraq it would be willing to discuss the issue of frozen assets after the annual pilgrimage, known as the Haj, which starts this week.

"There are small sums belonging to Iraqi banks that are frozen in Saudi banks, but Saudi banks have 10 times more frozen in Iraqi banks," Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz said, putting the value of Saudi assets at \$57 million.

He added that Iraq still owed Saudi Arabia more than \$7 billion in unpaid

debts.

Before King Fahd intervened, the build-up of pilgrims at Arar was seen as a bid to pressure the United Nations into releasing funds from U.N.-supervised Iraqi oil revenues.

Iraq refused to accept a U.N. compromise offer to send the money through a third party such as the Red Cross and demanded that \$44 million be deposited in its own central bank despite the embargo.

Some 4,000 other Iraqi pilgrims travelled to Mecca, including more than 340 mostly elderly or sick Iraqis flown out from Baghdad despite the U.N. embargo.

Baghdad broke off diplomatic ties with Riyadh during the Gulf War over Kuwait. It has since December stepped up verbal attacks on Riyadh for allowing U.S. and British warplanes to use a Saudi air base to police southern Iraq.



MARATHON IN ROME: Approximately 35,000 participants begin the Rome Marathon on Sunday. The competition was won by Kenya's Philip Tanui in 2 hours, 9 minutes and 56 seconds. Rome Mayor Francesco Rutelli announced that the next edition of the Rome Marathon will be run on Jan. 1, 2000 and will be the first competition of this kind of the third Millennium (AP photo)

Riyadh wants to question suspects abroad over bombing

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia wants to question suspects abroad over the 1996 Dhahran truck-bombing which cost the lives of 19 U.S. servicemen, the interior minister said Sunday.

Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz, asked if any arrests had been made, told reporters that "this affair is linked to people who are outside the country."

"We hope to be able to question them in the kingdom. Perhaps they are innocent but the proof which we possess requires their coming here, and that's what we are working for," he said.

"This affair cannot last too long and it must be taken to court," said Prince Nayef.

The interior minister said last May that the June 25, 1996 attack on a U.S. military housing complex in the eastern city of Dhahran was the work of Saudi nationals without foreign involvement.

In 1997, Saudi Arabia demanded the extradition from the United States of a Saudi suspect, Hani Abdul Rahim Sayegh, who was deported from Canada to the United States earlier the same year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel holds SLA officers

MARIJAYOUN (R) — Israel detained three intelligence officers from its militia allies in south Lebanon on Sunday on suspicion of aiding Hizbollah guerrillas, a militia source said. The source in the South Lebanon Army (SLA) said Adel Younes, an SLA liaison officer with Israel's Mossad spy agency, was among those held for allegedly helping the pro-Iranian guerrilla group. "We don't know if they were transported into Israel or are in the Khiam prison [inside Israel's south Lebanon occupation zone]," the source said. Lebanon and Israel are officially at war and the Beirut government says SLA members are traitors, punishable by execution.

Explosions injure shepherd in Lebanon

SIDON (AFP) — A Lebanese shepherd was slightly wounded Sunday and a number of his sheep were killed by four small explosions on the outskirts of a village in southern Lebanon, police said. It was not immediately known what kind of explosive device was responsible, they said. The incident occurred near the village of Majdel Seim, east of the southern port city of Tyre, in a field surrounded by the Israeli army hilltop positions of Qantara, Qobah and Mashaarun at the edge of the Israeli-occupied border zone of southern Lebanon, they said. The shepherd, Mohammad Kamel Maaz, was transported to hospital at the nearby village of Tebbine.

Lebanon sentences 6 to die for spying

BEIRUT (AP) — A Lebanese military court has sentenced six Lebanese to death for collaborating with Israel, according to the official national news agency. The court convicted the six of "contacting the Israeli enemy and its agents and passing on information to its advantage" as well as entering Israel without Lebanese government permission, the agency reported. The court also sentenced 15 others to varying prison terms on charges of collaborating with Israel. Last month, state prosecutor Nasri Lahoud indicted 201 Lebanese citizens on charges of collaborating with Israel. The vast majority of those indicted remain at-large.

Israel asks PNA to hand over suspects

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel has asked the Palestinian National Authority to hand over three Islamists suspected of a 1995 bombing that killed seven Israeli soldiers and an American student, an Israeli official said on Sunday. David Bar-Ilan, a senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said it was the first such extradition request since Israel and the PNA signed the U.S.-brokered Wye River land-for-security deal last October. Bar-Ilan said Israel had recently asked for the extradition of Adnan Al Ghoul, Yousef Samiri and Nabil Sharihi, but the PNA had yet to respond. Ghoul, who has been at large since he fled a Palestinian prison last December, is considered an expert bomb-maker and is said to have been involved in explosions carried out by the Islamic group Hamas that killed scores of Israelis. Witnesses said Palestinian security officials have been camped outside his house since his jail break.

PNA releases two Hamas militants

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority has released two members of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, who had been in jail for three years without charge or trial, a Hamas official said Sunday. Harb Salameh Daks, 32, left prison on Saturday after a Palestinian high court order, while Hisham Al Kahlut, 24, was freed last week on medical grounds because he suffered psychological problems, Israeli Haniyeh told AFP. The high court has issued similar rulings in the past but virtually all were ignored by the Palestinian National Authority. "We hope the Authority will continue to release detainees, particularly those who have been ordered freed by the high court," Haniyeh said. "It would be a positive step to calm the political situation and strengthen national unity."



Questions come in waves before cruise holidays

MIAMI (R) — Cruise-ship life is a mystery to millions, judging from the questions typically put to U.S. travel agents by Americans considering sea-going vacations. "Does the crew go home at night?" is among the most frequently asked questions, according to a travel agents survey released at a Miami trade conference sponsored by the American Society of Travel Agents. "Can I fish off the boat?" is another. Many people talking to travel agents, who last year sold the great bulk of 5.4 million cruise bookings from North America, also want to know: "Can I take my dog?", "If I don't like it, can I get off?" and "If I get seasick, will I get a refund?"

Bookmaker offers odds on Y2K baby

LONDON (R) — British bookmaking firm William Hill is offering odds of 20-1 to women willing to bet that they will give birth on Jan. 1, 2000. Induced births will not be counted in the bets. Longer odds of 50-1 are available for punters willing to bet that opposition Conservative Party leader William Hague and his wife will have a baby on New Year's Day, the betting shop chain said. The odds on Prince Edward or Prince Charles becoming fathers that day are even longer, at 500-1.

City blames air pollution on dogs

MEXICO CITY (R) — Authorities are blaming dog faeces for contributing to Mexico city's infamous air pollution and are appealing to dog owners to help deal with the problem. There are 1.2 million dogs in Mexico city's federal district, which encompasses most of the city, dropping around 120,000 tonnes of faeces a year in streets and parks, according to an official report quoted by Saturday's Reforma newspaper. Dried particulates from the waste enter the air and combine with other pollutants to pose health risks ranging from gastrointestinal disease and salmonella to chronic bronchitis and allergies that can irritate asthma, the epidemiological department report said.

People drenched after prayer for rain

MASERU (AFP) — Just hours after Christians gathered in churches throughout the kingdom of Lesotho on Sunday to pray for rain at the injunction of King Letsie III, it began to pour, correspondents said. The Lesotho weather office predicted that more rain was on the way, the SABA news agency reported. In the capital Maseru, people sought shelter from the rain along the main streets as they returned home from the church services. King Letsie had earlier declared this Sunday and the following Sunday as national days of prayer for rain.

Dogs left to howl as legacy denied

WELLINGTON (R) — Two farm dogs left NZ\$1 million (\$531,200) by their deceased owner have lost their windfall after a court ruling. The South Auckland farmer had left much more money to the dogs than to his third wife, who received NZ\$200,000, and left nothing to two sons from his first marriage, the New Zealand Herald reported. Apart from the dogs, the main inheritors were two sons of friends who were to receive the balance of the NZ\$4.7 million estate. High Court Judge Dame Silvia Cartwright agreed with a petition from the widow and the farmer's sons that NZ\$1 million was too much for the dogs. The sum for the hunting dogs was totally unjustifiable "even for the most aristocratically raised dogs," the judge ruled. Instead, the widow received 61.5 per cent of the farmer's estate, with the rest split evenly between the two sons and the two sons of friends. It was up to them to care for the dogs, the judge said.